ITALIA!

Issue 128 **July 2015** £4.40

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HOLIDAYS PROPERTY FOOD WINE CULTURE PEOPLE

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Enjoy the majesty of the hilltop towns and cities in the 'Green Heart' of Italy

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Spend a leisurely weekend in the forgotten city of Veneto

THE BEST TUSCAN SPA BREAKS

RECIPES FROM PUGLIA

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Homes in Umbria, page 20

Welcome!



The land-locked region of Umbria, one of only a few in Italy that doesn't have a coastline, is an absolute gem. Verdant and undulating, it boasts stunning hilltop towns and cities, and is an ever-popular destination for holiday makers and property buyers alike. In this issue of *Italia!* our resident property expert Fleur Kinson revisits central Italy and explores the region and what it has to offer if you're looking to invest in a home from home – or maybe even relocate completely. Join Fleur in her quest on page 20.

If you're looking for just a weekend or a week-long break then we have several suggestions this month, spanning the country. Thinking of visiting a stunningly renovated palazzo in Venice? Then turn to page 55. Perhaps a few days in the lesser-known city of Treviso tickles your fancy? If so turn to page 32. Or if you'd rather experience the south of Italy then follow us on a journey through Puglia that starts on page 68. If it's all-out indulgence you enjoy, then come with us on a search for the very best spa resorts in Tuscany, starting on page 40.

Elsewhere in the issue we present you with a whole load of recipes for you to try at home – seasonal, regional and quick to cook; we sample the Chianti wines that our supermarkets have to offer; we have our usual mix of Italian-related news, events and items to purchase, and we also look at properties to buy in Le Marche.



Paul Pettengale Editor

PS Italia!*'s brand new guide to* Venice, the Veneto & Beyond *is on sale now (£7.99). Visit* www.italytravelandlife.com/italiaguides *for details.*

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Subscribe to *Italia!* and save money on the usual price* and get the magazine delivered directly to your door every month! Turn to page 30 for more information.

*UK orders only

AWARD WINNER! The Italian Tourist Board voted *Italia!* the 'Best Overall Publication 2011'



THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



CATHERINE SIDWELL is an experienced travel writer who has written extensively about resorts in Italy. In this issue of *Italia!* she travels through southern Tuscany, discovering the very best spa resorts in the region. To experience the ultimate in luxury, peace, tranquility and thermal wellness, join Catherine on page 40.



FLEUR KINSON is, quite possibly, the UK's top authority on buying property in Italy. She's been studying the regional markets for a decade and is therefore the best placed person to write two features for *Italia!* this month. On page 72, she begins a new series on buying an Italian home; on page 20 you can read her guide to buying in Umbria.



JOE GARTMAN is a familiar face in *Italia!* and, together with Freya Middleton, one of our resident writers on Italy's unique artistic and cultural heritage. On page 67 he explores the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome and discovers a little known statue of intrigue. As for Freya? See page 38, where she explains the history of grotesque art.

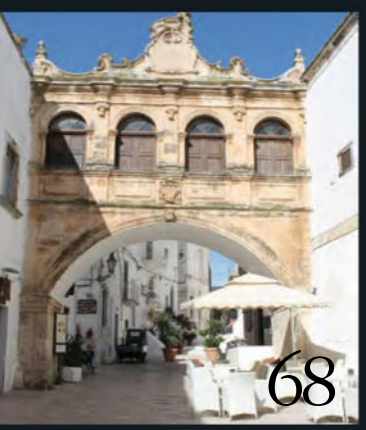

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PROPERTY

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Umbria currently offers reduced prices and is an excellent place to buy a property, says **Fleur Kinson**.

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Jane Smith and her husband Richard add a swimming pool and lay the insulation for their cotto tile roof to be laid upon.

51 PROPERTY FOCUS: LE MARCHE
Le Marche is still the up-and-coming region where the financially astute come to invest.

HOLIDAYS

32 48 HOURS IN TREVISO
Sara Scarpa avoids the tourist trail to visit Treviso, 'The Painted City', one of the lesser lights of Veneto.

40 THE SPA RESORTS OF TUSCANY
Seeking out peace and tranquillity, **Catherine Sidwell** experiences a thermal wellness tour in southern Tuscany.

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Patricia Cleveland-Peck investigates the transformation of the Palazzo Papadopoli into the Aman Canal Grande Hotel in Venice.

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The Grotesque style was all the rage in Italy in the 1500s. **Freya Middleton** explains its provenance and form.

67 FAST CULTURE
Joe Gartman shows us two statues in a rather small, bare room in the Palazzo Massimo alle Terme in Rome.

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77 FOUR TAKES ON ASPARAGUS
It takes time and space to grow, and its season is short, yet there is nothing quite like the taste of fresh asparagus.

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From summery courgette rolls to a decadent bread pudding dessert, chef **Domenico Maggi** brings you the best of his home region.

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ON THE COVER



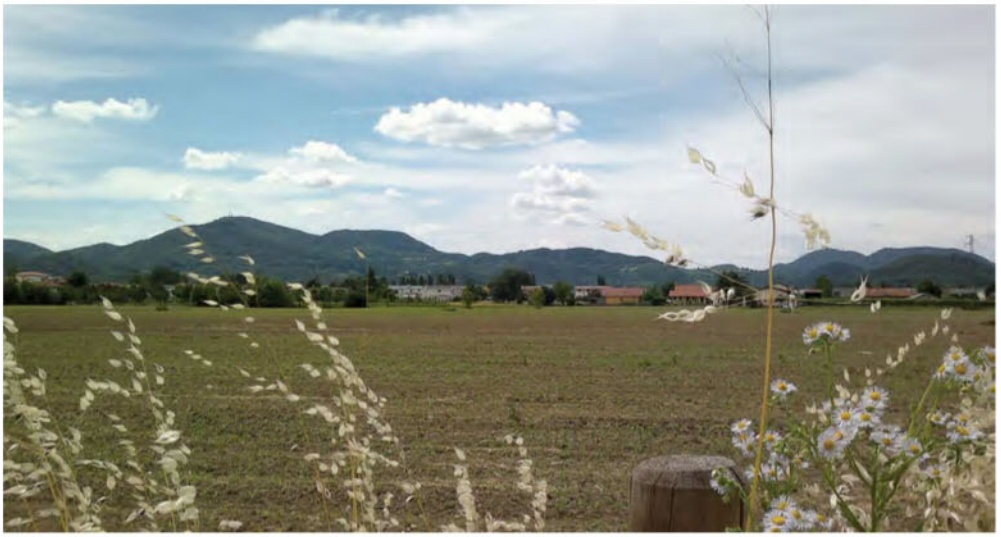
READERS' PHOTO COMPETITION!

Send us your favourite photos from your Italian travels, and each month the best photo will win a bottle of **Nino Franco Rustico Prosecco** and cooler!*



THIS MONTH'S WINNER
Mandy Mason, Newton Abbot
"I love this photo that I managed to capture during my visit to Pisa. The church on the right-hand side was built to house one thorn in the headpiece worn by Jesus."

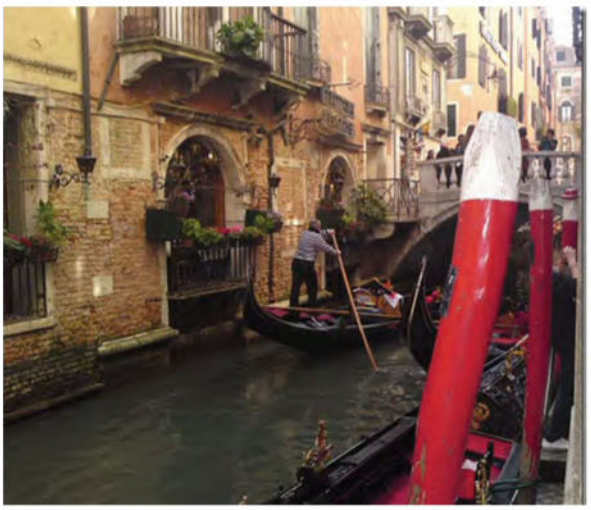
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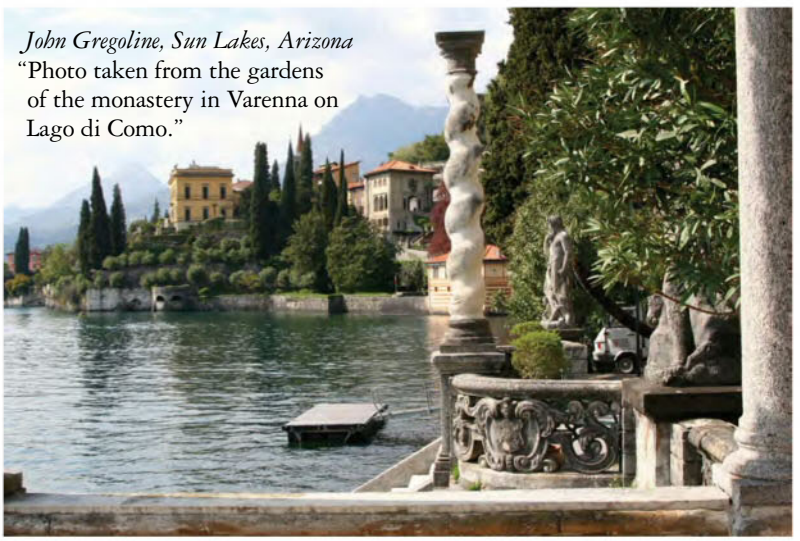
Sheryl Miccoli, by email
"The attached photo is a view of the Euganean Hills taken from Montegrotto Terme, where I've been living part-time for the past four years. It's a lovely area, with all the facilities you would expect in a spa resort and also within easy reach of Padova, Venice, Verona, Lake Garda and Sottomarina and Chioggia on the coast. It still feels surreal to be able to hop on a bus and visit a beautiful city like Venice whenever the fancy takes me!"



Jason Barrett, Washington, DC
"Ciao *Italia!* magazine! Attached is a photo I took of a bike outside of a building in Florence. Since I'm a fan of watermelon, I couldn't resist the colors! Hope you like it! Ciao for now! :-)"



Elizabeth Jones, Guildford
"This is Venice, in spring time, before the crowds have arrived. We had just come to the end of our first gondola trip and were standing watching another gondolier passing and relishing the wonderful experience."



John Gregoline, Sun Lakes, Arizona
"Photo taken from the gardens of the monastery in Varenna on Lago di Como."



Nicola Stott, Milnrow
"A shot from the top of Malcesine, Lake Garda, last September. A gorgeous day but extremely cool up there!"

HOW TO ENTER Email high-resolution (300dpi) jpegs of your photos of Italy to **italia@anthem-publishing.com** or send prints to 'Reader Photo Competition' at the address given on page 18. Please include a brief explanation of your photo, plus your name, delivery address and a phone number (for our couriers). You must be over 18 to enter.

READER OFFER *Italia!* readers get a 10 per cent discount off Nino Franco wines from **www.sommelierschoice.com** until 1 December 2015 by entering the code 'italia10' at the checkout.

Please note: Any photos you submit must be your own work and you must have the right to send them for inclusion on this page. By sending your entry, you are confirming that *Italia!*'s use of your photo(s) will not constitute infringement of any rights, and confirming that you are over 18.



*Prosecco and cooler delivered to mainland UK addresses only

THIS MONTH *July 2015*

In **Italian news** this month, modern art squabbles in Venice, American A-listers in Florence, gay marriage in Rome, and more…



Bottle of Rum and Newspaper by Juan Gris (Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, Italy.) [Public domain], via Wikimedia Commons

GUGGENHEIM GRANDSONS FILE LAWSUIT TO PROTECT ART MASTERPIECES

A row has erupted at Venice's Peggy Guggenheim Collection over the way the artwork is being kept. Two grandsons of the late founder Peggy Guggenheim are reported to be unhappy that her renowned collection of modern art – including masterpieces by Picasso, Pollock and Klee – has been lumped in with pieces from the Schulhof Collection, claiming that this does not adhere to what she requested on her deathbed in 1979. Sandro Rumney and Nicolas Hélion are filing a lawsuit to protect their grandmother's collection, which she accumulated using the vast wealth left to her by her tycoon father, a victim of the Titanic tragedy. However, the New York-based Solomon R Guggenheim Foundation, which now owns the art works, scoffed at the claims, insisting that the two men were "not [Peggy's] heirs and were not mentioned in her will". The Peggy Guggenheim Collection is situated in an 18th-century palace on the banks of the Grand Canal, and is one of Venice's most popular tourist attractions.



Photograph © Jerry T. Mosey / AP / Press Association Images



Photograph by dalbera from Paris, France [CC BY 2.0 (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0)], via Wikimedia Commons

SNIPPETS…SNIPPETS…SNIPPETS…SNIPPETS…SNIPPETS



Baboon Thiefs Break Into Car To Steal Pizza (Storyful, Wild Animals)

MONKEY TROUBLE

If you think it's just humans who love pizza, you're much mistaken. A group of tourists on safari in South Africa discovered to their amusement that baboons are also rather partial to the Italian food staple. "It was only when a large male baboon walked in front of the car that we realised it was trying to open our door," one of the tourists told Storyful.com. "Fortunately, the primate soon moved on to the vehicle in front and even jumped in for some pizza!" You can watch the video on YouTube – it's called "Baboon Thiefs Break Into Car To Steal Pizza".

NIGHT NIGHT AT THE OPERA?

They say that life mimics art, and the predicament facing some of Italy's opera houses is like something from a Verdi tragedy. The Teatro Lirico in Cagliari will become the first Italian opera house in modern history to close unless it receives a major cash investment from Italy's culture ministry. The company has a budget deficit of €25m and is not the only one to have fallen on seriously hard times. Ironically, Italian opera is thriving overseas, with the current production of Verdi's *La Traviata* at London's Royal Opera House being labelled a triumph (www.roh.org.uk).



Photograph © Jordan Strauss/ Invision / Press Association Images

The couple spent time in the resort of Portofino, a visit that made the headlines after they accidentally gatecrashed a wedding while visiting a local church

JAY-Z AND BEYONCE POP UP IN FLORENCE

Jay-Z may have 99 Problems, but he'll feel a lot better about them having enjoyed a holiday in Florence recently. The US rapper and his equally A-list wife Beyoncé were taking a break from their busy schedules to hang out in the romantic city, where they were spotted taking photos of the scenery during a relaxed evening stroll. The loved-up pop stars are evidently big fans of Italy – only last year, they spent time in the picturesque resort of Portofino, a visit that made the headlines after the couple accidentally gatecrashed a wedding while visiting a local church.



POMPEII PLASTER CASTS UNDERGO RESTORATION

Restoration work has begun on the plaster casts of 86 Pompeii victims. The poignant relics were created in the mid 19th century around the preserved remains of men, women and children killed during the 79AD disaster when Mount Vesuvius erupted, destroying the Roman city. They offer a fascinating and deeply moving insight into how quickly the tragedy occurred, with some of the body shapes cowering with arms outstretched in terror. The restorations are being carried out to prepare the casts for a forthcoming exhibition entitled *Pompeii And Europe*. "It can be very moving handling these remains when we apply the plaster," said Stefania Giudice, a conservator from the National Archaeological Museum in Naples. "Even though it happened 2,000 years ago, it could be a boy, a mother or a family. It's human archaeology, not just archaeology." Between 10,000 and 25,000 people are believed to have died during the Vesuvius eruption, many of them at Pompeii. The site was fully rediscovered in 1748 and has been a major tourist destination ever since.

Photography © iStock, unless otherwise stated

S...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPETS...SNIPPE

WINE ART HITS THE JACKPOT AT AUCTION

Ornellaia's wines are known for their distinctive character, but in 2009 the Italian producer launched an initiative, Vendemmia d'Artista, that would bring even more life to their wares. Every year, they would choose a world-renowned artist to design bottles that echoed the properties of that particular vintage. Well, for its 2012 vintage L'Incanto (The Enchantment), it commissioned Swiss artist John Armleder, and some of the resulting works have just been auctioned for a good cause. In all, nine bottles went under the hammer at a gala dinner, with €202,700 being raised for the Fondation Beyeler gallery in Basel.

FIRST CIVIL UNIONS IN ROME

Times are changing in Rome... In May, the city launched its new civil-unions registry, which means that couples can now 'tie the knot' without needing recognition from the church. Of the 20 twosomes who said their vows on the opening day, 14 were gay, and for many observers the new law is long overdue. "Today, a just, serene, peaceful and egalitarian Italy takes centre stage," said bridegrooms Mauro Cioffari and Davide Conte, who were joined together at the City Hall. "Long live love, long live liberty." However, the happy scenes unfolding were certainly not to everyone's satisfaction, with one protester shouting at the newlyweds, "You are ruining Italy!"





BRITISH WORLD WAR II REMAINS FOUND IN ITALY

Amateur historians with metal detectors have found the remains of two British soldiers at opposite ends of Italy, believed to have been killed during the Second World War. The first of the two discoveries – which were made as archaeologists scoured the country's battlefields – came near the village of Pellezzano, south of Naples. Bones and a skull buried beneath the soil were found just a stone's throw away from British Army-issue bullet casings. And just weeks later, in the village of Casalfiumanese in the northern Emilia Romagna region, bones, a helmet, a water bottle and a webbing belt were found. These are thought to have belonged to a soldier who was part of a battalion attacking a German defensive position called the Gothic Line. The finds are a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by Britain's young soldiers, hundreds of miles away from home. They have now been passed on to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency at the Ministry of Defence in London, which deals with the unidentified remains of military personnel.



A CORKING YEAR FOR PROSECCO

For the first time ever, the amount spent on prosecco worldwide has overtaken that spent on champagne. According to recently released figures, sales of the Italian wine soared to £181.8 million in 2014, exceeding the £141.3 million spent on champagne in the same period. In total, 28 million bottles of prosecco were bought, more than ten times the number purchased five years ago. Experts reckon the swing in popularity towards the Italian drink is down to the recession persuading people to plump for the cheaper option – the average cost of a bottle of prosecco is £6.49, compared to £16.23 for champagne. But Robert Cremonese, export manager for prosecco brand Bisol, reckons there's more to it than that. "People love prosecco because it's uncomplicated and quaffable," he says. "You should never take it too seriously." A word of caution, though: prosecco's boom in popularity could cause problems in the long term, as Cremonese warns: "Last year's harvest was very poor, and down by up to 50 per cent in some parts, so there's a very real possibility of a global shortage."

SOUTH TYROL RELUCTANT TO CELEBRATE WAR CENTENARY

Italy recently commemorated the centenary of its entry into the First World War, but there was one part of the country that was not happy about having to raise the Italian flag – the northern region of South Tyrol. The area, which is dominated by the Dolomite mountains, had been part of the Austro-Hungarian empire but was ceded to Italy after the Allied victory in 1918. It has retained many of its Austrian characteristics, though – German is still widely spoken among its people, while dishes like schnitzel and sauerkraut are served in the local restaurants – and the semi-autonomous government there felt that the centenary was not a milestone to be honoured. "There's nothing to celebrate," said Governor Arno Kompatscher, who slated the order from Rome to fly the flag in the region as "absolutely inappropriate".



ESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP P



ITALIAN VILLA FLOPS AT AUCTION

It sounds like the perfect home: a two-storey villa near Romeo and Juliet's Verona. But when such a property was posted on Chinese auction site Taobao, it received no bids. Despite being viewed thousands of times (admittedly, one of those views was by us while we were writing this story), nobody laid down a bid before the 12-hour deadline elapsed. "Not a single bid so far," one viewer exclaimed. "Real rich people won't come here. This is just a stunt." Maybe it was simply that the villa was too expensive – sellers Cansine set the initial asking bid at an eye-watering 100 million yuan (around £10.5 million).

GERMAN ARTIST DROWNS IN VENICE

A renowned German painter has drowned after falling into Venice's Grand Canal. Ekkehard Drefke was photographing a street performer on a jetty when he lost his balance and plunged into the water. Gondolieri and water police attempted to save him but couldn't get to him in time. The Brühl-based artist, 75, was believed to be working on a new project, *Venice, Lost Paradise*, when the tragedy occurred. "He wasn't simply an artist but rather a central figure in the cultural network of the city of Brühl," officials in the German city said in a statement, "and he has left his mark on the local art scene and beyond."

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ITALIA!'S *Top picks*

Some music, film and literature for you to enjoy at your leisure over the summer months, plus the best in food, style and holidays, and three very **special little gifts** for the wine lover in your life...



THE HEAVENLY ITALIAN ICE CREAM SHOP

If you find yourself spending your summer holiday cooped up in a caravan with rain beating against the window, you could always lose yourself in a good book. Abby Clements' *The Heavenly Italian Ice Cream Shop* (Simon & Schuster, £5.59) will dispense a great big dollop of sunshine into your life for a few days, telling the story of an Anglo-Italian couple who quit England to run an ice-cream shop on the Amalfi Coast. Romance and *gelato*.



SIMPLY ITALIAN COOL

We love things that come in a tin – boiled sweets on long car journeys spring to mind. And the *Simply Italian Cool* three-CD box set is no exception. Released on 29 June (just in time for those hot summer days!), it features classics by the likes of Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra, as well as tracks by lesser-known (but equally brilliant) Italian artists. You even get Sandie Shaw singing in Italian. You'd never know she was born in Essex! £6.99, www.amazon.co.uk

CAPRICCI DI CANELLI

Elsewhere on this spread, you'll find an antipasti board... Well, here's something delicious to serve on it. Capricci di Canelli is spicy peppers filled with tuna, anchovies and capers. The peppers are cultivated in Monferrato, Piemonte; hand-picked, left to mature and then filled, once again by hand. The result is a fresh taste sensation that's sure to prompt the question, "Where did you get these?" The answer is Carluccio's, and they're £5.95 for a 180g jar. www.carluccios.com



TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS MONT

Top 3 gifts for WINE LOVERS

What do you buy the oenophile who has everything? Well, here's something to keep it in, something to open it with, and a special bottle **for a special occasion...**

1 WINEBREATHER CARAFE

Here's one for the impatient oenophile: a device that enables you to drink wine straight away without having to wait for it to breathe first. You simply attach the Winebreather Carafe to your freshly opened bottle, tip the bottle upside down and voilà! – ten times more oxygen will be added to your wine in under two minutes. You can then serve it directly from the carafe and pour the wine back into the bottle. £36.75, www.johnlewis.com



ANTIPASTI BOARD

Serving food on a wooden board is the in thing at the moment, so jump on the bandwagon with one of Harch's stylish creations. We love its antipasti board: fashioned out of solid Irish oak, it's large enough to serve up a good selection of meats, cheese and olives, and comes with three different-sized pots for those all-important pickles and accompaniments. It's reversible, too – flip it over and you can use it as a chopping board, perfect for slicing garlic bread or ciabatta. £54.99, www.harchwoodcouture.com





GOODFELLAS

"As far back as I can remember, I always wanted to be a gangster." Twenty-five years after its cinematic release, Martin Scorsese's *Goodfellas* stands the test of time as one of the greatest movies ever made. If you've never seen it, there's no time like the present: a new 25th Anniversary Blu-ray release brings mobster Henry Hill's exhilarating story to life in glorious HD. Funny, fast-paced and very, very violent, it will hit you right between the eyes. £16, www.amazon.co.uk

HOLIDAYS AT A VENETIAN VINEYARD

Gastro-retreats combine the three best things in the world: food, drink and holidays. We're tempted to drop everything right this minute and head off to the Bisol family's Venissa Estate on the Venetian island of Mazzorbo. As well as producing unique wine, this secluded vineyard-cum-resort gives you the opportunity to sample lagoon life in all its tranquil finery: take rowing lessons, enjoy excursions with local fishermen or learn the art of photography in some of the most beautiful corners of the island. Sounds like heaven! Prices vary, venissa.it/en/vino





DINING IN STYLE

Italian furniture is up there with the most stylish in the world, and while this gorgeous Calligaris L'Eau dining chair doesn't come cheap (especially if you're planning on buying five or six), it will have your guests cooing with admiration. Concentric ripples emanate within the acrylic, giving off a water effect that conjures up images of secluded beaches and waves lapping at your toes. £126, www.heals.co.uk

TH'S TOP 3...THIS MONTH'S T 3...THIS MONTH'S TOP 3...THIS

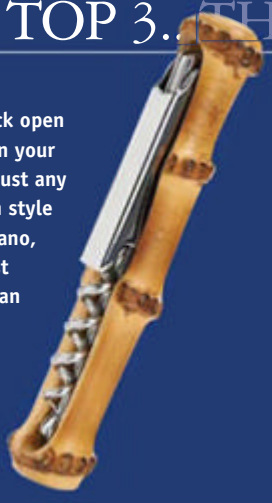
2 MONTEVERRO TINATA 2012

According to the popular adage, out of every bad thing comes good. And that was certainly true of the Tuscan winter of 2011/12. One of the driest in living memory, the effect on the Monteverro winery was profound. The extraordinary conditions accelerated the year's grape-ripening process and provided a great balance between acidity and fruit. The following summer's wine was a triumph. The 2012 vintage Tinata – a blend of Syrah and Grenache – is a deep, dark ruby with a nose of rosemary, camphor, cedar, milk chocolate, cherries, lilac, geranium and rose. Try reciting that lot without licking your lips! www.monteverro.com



3 BUTLER'S FRIEND

You've been waiting years to crack open that dusty old bottle of Chianti in your cellar – surely you're not going to use just any old corkscrew for the occasion? Do it in style with the Butler's Friend from Cedes Milano, handcrafted from bamboo and the finest stainless steel by a small group of Italian artisans, then varnished to protect it against water and humidity. If we weren't afraid to use terrible puns, we'd say it's a corking corkscrew. £198, www.matchesfashion.com



EVENTS IN JULY 2015

Planning a trip to **Italy this month**? If you want fireworks to light up your life, head to Venice for the Festa del Redentore. For submerged statues of Christ, it's Liguria, while the Roman neighbourhood of Trastevere hosts 'Our Festival'…



PALIO DI SIENA

2 July

Siena

If you thought the British were the only nationality to enjoy a good horse race, think again. In fact, two of the world's most famous races take place in Siena every year, on 2 July and 16 August. Following a colourful costume parade (the Corteo Storico), ten runners and riders spend around 90 seconds galloping around the Piazza del Campo – that's if the jockeys manage to remain on their horses. So, very much like our own horse races then, with one exception: the jockeys ride bareback! www.thepalio.com

FESTA DELLA MADONNA BRUNA

2 July

Matera

Like your festivals peaceful and reserved? Then stay away from Matera on 2 July! Legend has it that once upon a time, a young peasant agreed to take a mysterious woman to the southern Italian town, but she disappeared on the way, leaving him with a statue and a letter revealing that she was the Virgin Mary. To celebrate the town's most famous moment, thousands take to the streets for a boisterous, costumed procession that culminates in people tearing chunks off an effigy of the Madonna. They're meant to be lucky! www.festadellabruna.it

FESTA MEDIEVALE

3-5 & 10-12 July

Monteriggioni

We challenge you to find an Italian town more picture-postcard than Monteriggioni – a medieval walled settlement built on a natural hillock in Tuscany. Understandably, it capitalises on its quaintness (not to mention its rich history) every July with a medieval festival that welcomes an abundance of costumed performers, tradespeople and food stalls. Indeed, such is its authenticity, you'll feel like you just stepped back in time to the Middle Ages. www.monteriggioni medievale.com

TRASIMENO MUSIC FESTIVAL

4-10 July

Trasimeno

Classical music goes hand in hand with beautiful scenery, which is why the Trasimeno Music Festival is the perfect marriage. It takes place every year against the spectacular natural backdrop of Lake Trasimeno, in the heart of Umbria, and primarily in the stunning 15th-century courtyard of the Castle of the Knights of Malta in Magione. This year's programme includes the likes of Brahms, Ravel, Mozart, Bach and Beethoven. Prepare to be enchanted. www.trasimenomusic festival.com

U FISTINU DI SANTA ROSALIA

10-15 July

Palermo

Now, there are carnival floats and there are carnival floats… If you're heading to the Sicilian city of Palermo for this annual procession, prepare to get neck ache as you gaze up at the centrepiece: a 50ft-high float containing a statue of Palermo's patron saint, Rosalia, and a band of musicians. Perhaps the locals felt that she needed building up a bit, seeing as her nickname is 'the little saint'. And you can build yourself up, too, by feasting on some of the succulent local produce.

FESTA DE NOANTRI

15-30 July

Rome

Who said you have to stick to touristy areas to enjoy the best events? Venture into Rome's lesser-known Trastevere neighbourhood in the last two weeks of July and you'll be rewarded with one of the city's – if not the country's – most vibrant festivals. It's primarily a religious occasion, commemorating the time when, allegedly, a statue of the Madonna was washed up into the nets of local fishermen, but live music and local food add to the general buzz.



Festa del Redentore, Venice

Photograph © iStock

GIFFONI FILM FESTIVAL

17-26 July

Giffoni

The largest children's film festival in Europe (possibly even the world), this event traditionally sees more than 2,000 youngsters from around 40 countries descend on the small town of Giffoni, near Naples, to watch and judge movies, and learn about the filmmaking process – kind of like a Cannes for kids. The theme of this year's festival – the 45th – is 'Carpe Diem' ('Seize the Day'). Maybe they will and, in a few years' time, one of them will be making the next Indiana Jones or Star Wars. www.giffonifilm festival.it

FESTA DEL REDENTORE

19 July

Venice

When plague ravaged Venice in 1576, more than 50,000 people lost their lives. The relief felt around the city when it finally ended was palpable: a great church, Il Redentore, was built as a mark of thanks, and the surviving citizens celebrated. Venetians still do: every year on the third Sunday of July, thousands take to their boats in Saint Mark's Basin, where they enjoy fine wine and food, and watch a majestic fireworks display.

BELLAVITA

19-21 July

London

The East End of London might be better known for its bangers and mash and jellied eels but, for three days in July, it will become *the* place to be for Italian food aficionados. Bellavita, held at the Old Truman Brewery in Brick Lane, claims to be the UK's largest trade show dedicated to gourmet Italian products. More than 200 stalls will showcase everything from artisan food to brand names including Lavazza coffee and Campari. www.bellavitaexpo.com

FESTIVAL PUCCINI

24 July-30 August

Torre del Lago

You don't need us to tell you that Puccini is one of Italy's greatest ever composers. But what we will say is that his operas sound even better delivered in the Great Outdoors! The Festival Puccini, held every year in the Tuscan town of Torre del Lago, close to Puccini's birthplace of Lucca, offers exactly that, putting on four or five of his best works in an open-air theatre. This year's programme includes: *Tosca*, (24-31 July; 15, 21 & 30 Aug), *Turandot* (25 July; 7, 16, 23 & 28 Aug), *Madama Butterfly* (1, 8, 14, 22 & 29 Aug) and *Il Trittico* (20 Aug). www.puccini festival.it

GIOSTRA DELL'ORSO

25 July

Pistoia

The thought of watching bears jousting is truly terrifying! Luckily, the Joust of the Bear is not what it sounds like. Instead, this centuries-old event (its roots go back to 1200) sees the various districts of Pistoia jousting on horseback in honour of Saint James. Leading up to the main event in the historic Piazza del Duomo, there's a procession through the streets of the city, where all the knights and horses taking part in the competition are either jeered or revered by their supporters. Chivalrous fun at its best!

FESTA DEL CRISTO DEGLI ABISSI

29 July

Liguria

Hidden away on the Ligurian coast is one of Italy's best-kept secrets: the picturesque, seashore monastery of San Fruttuoso, only accessible by foot or boat. But even more of a secret is what's submerged under the water: a bronze statue of Christ, moulded from ship parts and the medals of bygone seafarers. This is the unusual destination for an annual procession commemorating those who have lost their lives at sea. A laurel crown is laid at the foot of the statue, and there's also a Mass on the beach.

Please note that the dates of all events are subject to change. If you plan to attend, check events are going ahead before you travel. All attempts are made to present the correct details.



Image: Lucas/Photocrowd.com www.photocrowd.com www.alamy.com



VIEWPOINT

This image arrives with us via a travel photography contest on Photocrowd in association with Alamy. It is by "Lucas" and it is called "Feeding the Soil"...

Photocrowd

Lucas explains: "Cultivating the land to get ready for winter and spring on a beautiful Tuscan vineyard in San Minato, Italy, between Pisa and Firenze. I volunteered on this vineyard for six weeks in 2014. It was an incredible experience, and a great opportunity to document daily life on the vineyard."

Today, many small farms increasingly rely on voluntary help from people keen to make sure that our agriculture is not lost to the globalization of food production by multinationals whose only true interests are short-term profit rather than long-term land sustainability. We salute the farmers and the workers.

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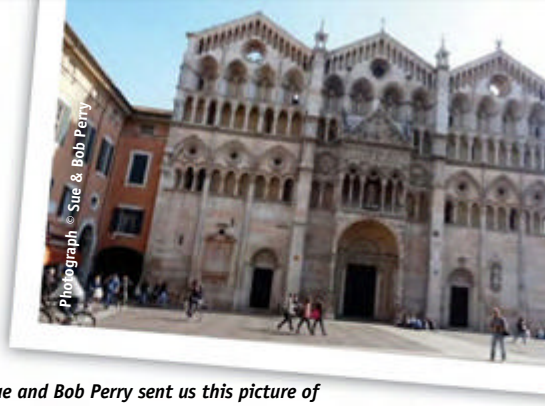
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LETTERS TO ITALIA!

Share your Italian experiences with us, and tell us what you would like to see in the magazine, by sending your photographs and letters to **italia@anthem-publishing.com**…



Sue and Bob Perry sent us this picture of their cycle tour around Ferrara

WINE FESTIVAL

LETTER OF THE MONTH JULY 2015

My husband and I moved to Sorgono, a village high up in the mountains in the middle of Sardinia in 2011. We were introduced to this area when our youngest son met and married a girl from the village after eight years of great holidays here. When my husband retired we decided to make the move permanently, so we bought and renovated a house on the edge of the village, and have never looked back. We have a great lifestyle; the sun, lovely mountain views, the people are so kind and friendly, and of course the food and wine, which brings me to the reason for my email.

As part of our Christmas present every year our eldest son gives us a subscription to your great magazine. I read a letter in the February issue from Alexander Caserta, in which he said perhaps it would be a good idea to cover some smaller towns. I thought you may be interested in covering our Cortes Apertas (wine festival) in October, it's a great event: the grapes are harvested and brought back to the village by a cart pulled by two oxen, then they are treaded by young people in traditional costume; everyone has a great time, and of course the wine is flowing. I am sure if you decide to come you will be given a great welcome.

Pam & Mike Hunter, Sardinia

VOGLIA D'ITALIA, DONCASTER

I thought your readers may like to hear about our local Italian Society, Voglia d'Italia, and what we enjoy.

The Society was formed in 1998 by a group of people interested in the Italian way of life and they chose the name Voglia d'Italia to reflect their "desire of Italy". Currently there are about 60 members.

The hard-working committee of eight of this non-profit making society arranges a varied and interesting programme of events throughout the year. The annual subscription of £15 covers 10 meetings and refreshments. If anyone wants to sample a session, s/he is welcome to do so for £3 per session.

Talks from visiting speakers range from 'How to make fresh pasta' to 'The mosaics of Ravenna'. This year the programme has included Roman architecture, Puglia, and a Christmas party – with Italian fun, frivolity and food, naturally! January saw the introduction of a photographic competition, which generated much debate!

We hope our "Voglia d'Italia" may encourage other towns/communities to organise something on similar lines. It is a good social and educational occasion in which members can exchange their experiences of Italy and all things Italian.

Catherine Crehan, Doncaster

CYCLING ROUND FERRARA

What a great article on Ferrara in your May 2015 edition of *Italia!*. Such an interesting read and great to reacquaint ourselves with Ferrara, a spot we visited a couple of years ago while staying in Bologna, when we decided to take a short train ride there to explore.

As soon as you arrive at the train station you are confronted by thousands of bicycles for hire. We set off around Ferrara's ancient wall, just locking our wheels up when we got off each time to explore. Ferrara has very wide streets that the bicycle tyres bump over and very old buildings with much history. The locals were friendly and of course the food we sampled each time we stopped was delicious.

Can we suggest you try the little villages of Osimo or Loretto some time as I am sure your readers would enjoy a day in these fascinating little spots also?

Sue and Bob Perry, Victoria, Australia

THE STRAIN OF THE TRAIN

I just thought I would like to impart our findings on our last railway journey from down here in Calabria to Naples. It is widely known that those of us who reside in the south have to put up with what can only be described as a "second class service" operated through Trenitalia to the entire region of Calabria.

The final straw came when we my husband and I were returning to England for Christmas. On 14 December we were taking a flight from Naples so required a train from Praia a Mare. We thought it might be a good idea to book first class this time as historically over the period we have lived here (four years), and have taken a train journey from here we have hardly ever found a clean, working toilet on any of the services, and these trains eventually terminate in Rome!

Imagine our angst when, upon noticing that the toilet at the back of the carriage was continually showing a red light, I asked the ticket collector why and was just told "Because it is out of order".

This would not have been so bad if, when I had investigated the other loo only to find that although there was not any notification on the door this was "out of order" too! This meant walking through two further carriages to find a service that was actually working. The main reason we'd chosen first class was because I am recovering from two hip operations and did not wish to walk the length of the train to find a convenience.

We returned to Italy on 30 January and it was freezing. Our train arrived from Rome and left Naples on schedule and we settled, into our carriage. Twenty minutes into the journey, the heating went off. At Battipaglia it started to snow! The journey to Praia a Mare lasted two hours and the heating had still not come back on by the time we left the train. Once again we were travelling first class.

I have attempted to fill in a complaints form on the Trenitalia website. However, it does not work and once the form has been completed it cannot be sent. Are we surprised? No nothing surprises us any more with this outfit.

Shame on you Trenitalia!

Jean Ireland, via email

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Homes in Umbria

Tuscany's tranquil neighbour combines glorious rural landscapes with perfect ancient hilltowns. Much loved by discerning visitors and homebuyers, Umbria currently offers reduced prices and is an excellent place to buy a property, says **Fleur Kinson**...

Nestling in the middle of the Italian peninsula, cosied up between Tuscany, Le Marche and Lazio, Umbria feels like a little world unto itself. Dreamy and serene, its landscapes and architecture seem to be in constant contemplation of the eternal, making everyday concerns feel rather small and irrelevant. This is a region of expansive rural vistas – rounded hills, fertile plateaus, mesmeric mountains and high woodlands. And a place of perfectly-preserved ancient towns – cobbled alleyways, celestial cathedrals, mysterious subterranean passages and view-girt ramparts. Time spent in Umbria often feels like time spent beyond time, and this is one of the region's great appeals. Umbria seems like a place of retreat and personal restoration.

If all this is beginning to sound a bit mystical, well, it's easy to come over all metaphysical under Umbria's spell. Geographically, this is the heart of Italy, but spiritually it's the country's soul. Many of Italy's most famous saints hail from Umbria and many of the nation's most exquisite religious buildings are here. Umbria's spacious landscapes with hilly horizons draw the eye ineluctably upward and seem naturally to incline the mind to higher things. The ethereal vision of distant hilltowns topped with perfect churches only adds to the sense of heaven being somehow nearer in Umbria than it is elsewhere.

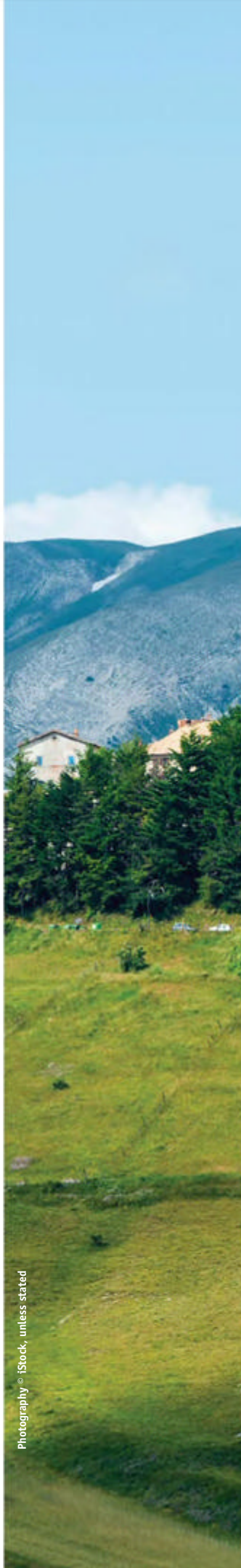


Bevagna is one of several desirable Umbrian hilltowns

IMMORTAL HILLTOWNS

For foreign visitors, Umbria's abundant hilltop settlements include some of the best-loved small towns in all of Italy. Gorgeous places such as Assisi, Todi, Orvieto, Montefalco and Spoleto each inspire countless devotees. Yet because they can be comparatively difficult to get to or aren't really on the way to anywhere else, Umbria's many hilltowns don't often become too swamped with visitors. Umbria is a thinly populated region with fewer than a million inhabitants, and it seems to comfortably absorb its many overseas visitors. It somehow pulls off the impossible trick of being adored by tourists yet still maintaining its innate tranquillity.

Foreign buyers in Umbria are often drawn to one particular ancient hilltown or another – buying in the town itself or in countryside just outside. It is strongly advised that you make a tour of many of the region's beautiful settlements and decide which are your favourites before pinpointing where exactly you'd like to buy a home. What if you fall in love with one perfect hilltown and buy an apartment in it, only to later discover an even more appealing town a dozen miles up the road?



Photography © iStock, unless stated



Il Piano Grande di Castelluccio, near the border with Le Marche



FANT-ATTIC

Type of property **Apartment with Roof Terrace**
Number of bedrooms **2**
Price **€195,000**
Location **Citta' di Castello (PG)**
Contact **WelcHome di Cesari Linda – www.welchome.net**
☎ +39 075 855 64 17 info@welchome.net

This fantastic attic is on top of a three-storey historic edifice, it has plenty of light, a large kitchen, diner, 2 beds, large bath, 2 store rooms plus one larger at ground floor. The terrace is spacious with excellent town views. The property was also home to artist Alberto Burri for a while. It is a home with character and truly beautiful. The right time is now.



VILLA I GERANI

Type of property **Villa with Garden/Land**
Number of bedrooms **6**
Price **€695,000**
Location **S. Martino in Colle, Gubbio (PG)**
Contact **WelcHome di Cesari Linda – www.welchome.net**
☎ +39 075 855 64 17 info@welchome.net

Perfect villa on two floors that can be used independently, at 15 minutes from Gubbio and 30 from Perugia's airport. The stones are natural and the woodwork is full chestnut wood. High quality materials inside and outside, spacious garden, open views. I Gerani is beautiful, welcoming and in soothing surroundings. The right time is now.



Todi overlooks the River Tiber on its course to Rome

Naturally, some settlements are lower-priced than others, and it may be that budget is your deciding factor. But even then, there are still plenty of similarly-priced localities and you should investigate a wide variety of options.

Small restored apartments in nice locations can often be had for less than €100,000

While each old Umbrian town has its own characteristics and personality, there are certain qualities that overlap. You're likely to encounter pedestrian-friendly old alleys and cobbled streets, radiant piazzas lined with lovely architecture, cleanliness and good upkeep, a warm and tight-knit local community, a very low crime rate and a sky-high quality of life. If the town is on a hilltop, then you'll enjoy sudden, inspiring vistas of the surrounding landscape from balconies, terraces and ramparts. Umbrian food, wine and restaurants are wonderful, and most settlements enjoy a lively calendar of public events.

MARKET THEN AND NOW

With so much going for it, Umbria was never going to remain undiscovered by foreign homebuyers. They first began trickling in about thirty years ago, initially in search of lower-priced homes than could be found in Umbria's fashionable neighbour Tuscany. In addition to lower prices, these early buyers discovered a region that many came to view as more enchanting than Tuscany itself. Umbria's fame spread, and property prices slowly rose, eventually reaching near-parity with those of Tuscany. With the global economic woes of 2008 onward, the number of foreign buyers in Umbria plummeted – as they did in almost all other parts of Italy. Prices, however, were relatively slow to sink, though eventually they did, albeit quite modestly.



Iconic Assisi is not necessarily as expensive as you might imagine

Today's buyers in Umbria can still take advantage of favourable prices, and of much greater scope for negotiation on asking price. Obviously this latter depends on how impatient to sell the vendor might be, but putting in an offer of up to 20 per cent below the asking price is well worth a go. Note that, recession or no recession, Umbria has remained as popular as ever with foreign visitors. The region is extremely unlikely to fall from favour, and should be seen as a reliable place to put your money. With prices currently down and competition for homes slight, now is a good time to buy in Umbria.

What kind of prices might you expect to pay? Small restored apartments in nice locations can, amazingly, often be had for less than €100,000. Go up to €150,000 and there are small two-bedroom houses to consider, as well as three-bedroom apartments in some charming medieval towns. Small country houses get going at around €200,000, and larger farmhouses at around €300,000. Large, fully-restored farmhouses with pools generally ask from €700,000 upward. Umbria offers very good value for money, and as one of Italy's most prestigious regions for property and holidays, it makes a sound investment.

THE LIE OF THE LAND

As you might imagine, Umbria has quite a bit of internal geographic variety. And of course there are some areas which are pricier than others.





Fleur visiting Mona (and cat) in Assisi

Photograph © Meredith Balham

MY LIFE IN UMBRIA

Mona Whittaker from Shipston-on-Stour in Warwickshire made a permanent move to Umbria in 2012. She owns a small flat in Assisi and works as a tour guide leading walking holiday groups across the Vale of Spoleto and its surrounding hilltowns.

What drew her to Italy, and to Umbria in particular? "I had a long-term relationship in England that came to an amicable end," Mona explains, "and I thought, 'Well, what now?' I had always vaguely hoped to live in a Mediterranean country one day, and I realised that this was the ideal moment to do it. I had no dependents, no partner to worry about, so I made the leap. It was a bit scary at first, but I've always enjoyed a challenge and an adventure! I was determined to make it work.

"I'd been to Assisi and its nearby towns a few times on my travels, and I just loved the setting. I'm not a religious person, but the buildings are simply beautiful and the surrounding landscapes are breathtaking. I knew it would be a good place to do work with tourists, and as an English-speaker I would have an advantage. My Italian was quite limited when I made the move, but boy oh boy has it improved since then. It has had to!

"Mine is a small apartment on the top floor of a house on the edge of town. It has two bedrooms, which means I very often have friends visiting from home. The big fear when you move abroad alone is that you'll be lonely, but when you're in a place as lovely as Assisi, there's never a shortage of friends and family who want to visit. I don't often spend more than six weeks without a visitor coming to stay. Then of course there are the Italians and their relentless friendliness. You just cannot be lonely in this country. The local people are so welcoming, and they include me in all the goings-on round town. In the warm months, everyone spends most of their time outside, so you're always meeting your neighbours and chatting. Making friends is easy.

"I was lucky that property prices in Assisi were a bit lower than usual when I bought, because of the effects of the recession. But even so, I was surprised by how affordable many of the apartments here were. Considering how many people love Assisi and want to visit, I was expecting prices to be much higher and that I might have to buy somewhere else. My apartment did need its décor updating, it's true, but it's not like I had to do any serious renovation or structural work on the place. I'm really, really happy with it. I'm so glad I made the decision to move to Italy. I love my life here."



IL GLICINE

Type of property **House with Annexe, Garden and Pool**
Number of bedrooms **2**
Price **€285,000**
Location **Ciciliano, Monte S. Maria Tiberina (PG)**
Contact **WelcHome di Cesari Linda – www.welchome.net**
☎ +39 075 855 64 17 info@welchome.net

Perfect property with space-wise home, nice terrace, annexe, beautiful garden and pool. Traditional quality materials and open views. Easy road access at 55 minutes from Perugia's airport. Mesmerizing location for a home that can be extended. The right time is now.



BUILDING PLOTS, LAKE TRASIMENO

Type of property **Two building plots totalling 1 hectare, each with permission granted for 3 and 4 bedroom homes with swimming pools**
Number of bedrooms **3/4**
Price **€45,000**
Location **A quiet asphalt road 10 minutes from Lake Trasimeno and the Tuscany border**
Contact **www.myhouseinumbria.build**

The current owners purchased this land as an 'air freshener' a number of years ago when their neighbouring farmer retired. An enviable location – it's walking distance from the nearest village yet on a peaceful asphalt road. It's suitably secluded amongst vines and olive trees but without the complications of white roads and steep inclines. Planning permission is included with a range of options. Best of all, the owners, who are struggling with the upkeep of the land, are uncharacteristically keen to sell, which translates to a highly cost-effective entry into this popular area between Lake Trasimeno and the Tuscany border.



Monte del Lago sits on a small promontory on the east banks of Lake Trasimeno

Here's a wide overview of the region, to help you decide where you might like to buy.

Central and western Umbria see dreamy fertile valleys unfurling between rounded hills. Some of the region's most-loked old hilltowns are here, such as Assisi, Todi, Spoleto and Montefalco. Umbria's northern, eastern and southern extremes see higher and more rugged elevations, with craggy rocks and dense forests putting in dramatic appearances. There is no shortage of attractive towns in these edgelands – for example, handsome, steep-streeted Gubbio in the north, and pretty little Norcia in the southeast. All areas see plenty of space and rural quiet.

Two other extremely attractive rural areas much beloved by foreign buyers are the Upper Tiber Valley in Umbria's north, and the delicious Vale of Spoleto in the centre. Both areas have proved very popular with foreign buyers over the years, but neither can be said to have become prohibitively expensive because of it. Sure, there are some lavish farmhouses and prime-sited townhouses that command large sums, but there are still plenty of reasonably-priced homes to be found in these parts, too.

If price is a major factor in your property hunt, i.e., if your budget is very restrictive, you'll probably want to know where Umbria's very cheapest areas are. In a nutshell, they're along the region's eastern and southern edges. Note that the Nera River Valley area, or 'Valnerina' in the southeast, is particularly recommended by Adriana Benedetti of the estate agency Umbrian Property. She says that the area is "still relatively undiscovered and offers very good value for money".

Umbria makes up for its lack of seaside by having some splendid lakes scattered about

Umbria is notable for being one of the very few Italian regions to have no coastline, with the Mediterranean lying about ninety minutes' drive away to east or west. Umbria does however make up for its lack of seaside by having some rather splendid lakes scattered about. The largest of these, Lake Trasimeno, is a warm, shallow oasis surrounded by pretty fields and attractive old towns. It marks one of several areas most loved by foreign buyers in Umbria. But despite this, prices remain quite reasonable and buying a property here is worth consideration.

HOLIDAY RENTALS

Buyers seeking to cover costs by offering holiday rentals on a property should take notice of the fact that Umbria continues to offer some of ➤

For sale - two building plots totalling 1 hectare, each with permission granted for 3 and 4 bedroom homes with swimming pools.

Situated on a quiet asphalt road 10 minutes from Lake Trasimeno and the Tuscany border.

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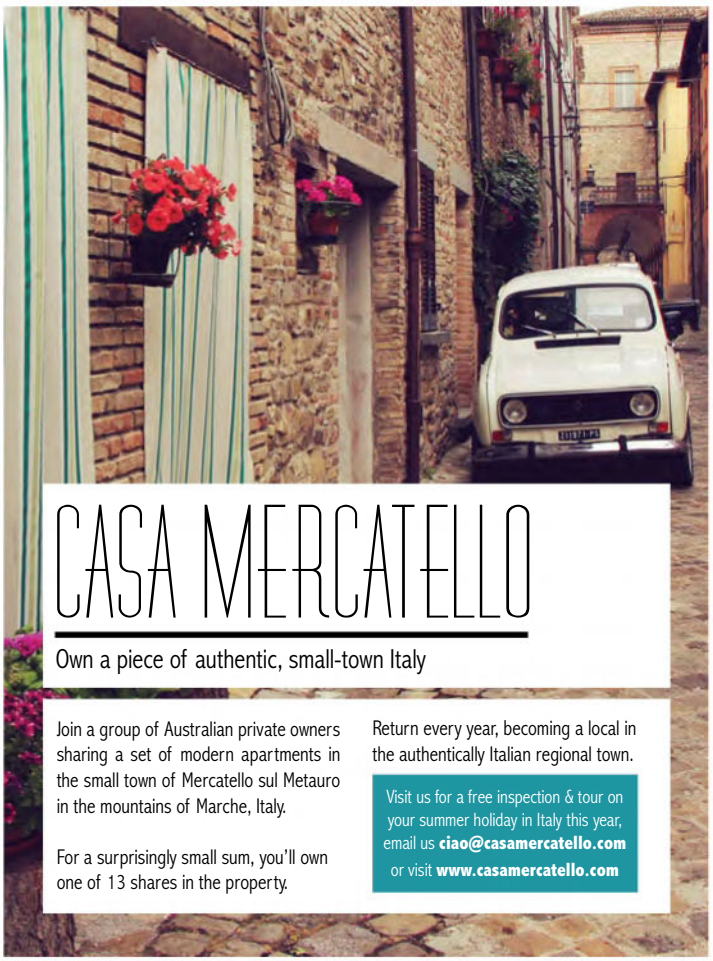


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UMBRIA REGIONAL GUIDE



INTRODUCTION

Umbria is known as the 'green heart of Italy', thanks to the fact that more than 30 per cent of the region is made up of woodland. This is a tranquil and historically rich region, landlocked by Tuscany, Lazio and Le Marche, and situated right in the middle of Italy – although the Mediterranean and Adriatic coasts are both only around 90 minutes' drive away for those who just can't keep away from the seaside. It is pleasantly uncrowded: Umbria's population density stands at half the national average. Yet although it has a low permanent population, visitor numbers here are high – tourists flock to Umbria each year, but magically, seem to be easily absorbed without creating the hustle and bustle found in other regions. The region remains a peaceful, spiritual place, and plays host to a wealth of fine historic buildings, among them Assisi's basilica and Orvieto's cathedral. The region's peace is further enhanced by the fact that Umbria is not criss-crossed by major roads, although the A1 motorway glides past its western edge. Rail and bus links are good, but a car is essential if you want to get off the beaten track. Umbria is also well served by airports – in both nearby regions as well as flights to Umbria's capital, Perugia. Politically, Umbria is divided into two main provinces: Perugia in the north and Terni in the south, and geographically by the valley of the River Tiber and the Valle Umbria. Geologically, Europe's main faultline runs through Umbria, as evidenced in the earthquake of 1997, which destroyed frescoes in Assisi and affected other towns in the region.

PERUGIA

❶ Umbria's capital, Perugia, has a significant historical heritage as well as being a vibrant university city with two academic establishments. It's an attractive medieval hill town, with a 3,000-year history that has witnessed occupations by the Etruscans and the Romans, among others. Perugia also boasts some of Europe's best-maintained medieval streets, with a host of superb palaces and *piazze* too. A stylish and vibrant city, Perugia is the venue for a variety

of lively festivals, especially during the summer – you won't want to miss the famous chocolate festival! It is the 'gateway' to Umbria for most UK visitors arriving by air since the advent of budget Ryanair flights to its airport a few years ago. While properties here can be on the pricey side, holiday rental returns can be great, and bountiful with students and businessmen eager for lodgings on a regular basis.

ASSISI

❷ Just half an hour's drive from Perugia and visible for miles around is the pink and cream hilltop town of Assisi, an iconic vision known throughout the world. It's another medieval jewel and a designated World Heritage Site, where you will find the Basilica of Saint Francis and other Franciscan sites. It's a beautiful, must-visit destination with year-round rental potential and it offers a fantastic range of property, although its prices reflect its desirability. It attracts streams of pilgrims in search of religious 'experiences', but there's so much more to see in this cultural haven.

LAKE TRASIMENO

❸ Head west and you'll find the Umbrian 'Riviera', Lake Trasimeno, with its mild microclimate, delightful islands and imperious castles. It's the fourth largest lake in Italy and a magnet for watersports enthusiasts, fishermen and cyclists. The views are serene and this is a popular spot for a second home and a great location for getting welcome holiday rental returns.

ORVIETO & TODI

❹ The tiny medieval town of Orvieto is south of Perugia, high on the remains of an ancient volcano. The Etruscans were the original settlers, but it is the medieval architecture that defines the town. Todi is halfway between Perugia and Terni – another small but beautiful ancient town, famous for its historic heritage, architecture, good food and wine. The surrounding area is dotted with interesting places to visit and lovely countryside. Both Todi and Orvieto are – understandably – among the region's pricier towns for properties.



The very ancient settlement of Gubbio stands in the northeast of the modern Province of Perugia

TERNI & THE SOUTH

❺ The area to the south and southeast of the region around the town of Terni is the least populated part of quiet Umbria. Terni itself is the area's major city, but is largely industrial, as the majority of its medieval architecture was destroyed during World War II. It has two interesting claims to fame: as the geographical centre of Italy there was a plan in 1867 to make Terni the country's capital, which, as history shows, was unsuccessful. Also, the city's first bishop was the martyred St Valentine who became the patron saint of lovers worldwide. The surrounding area is largely mountainous offering up unspoilt valleys, rivers and meadows, and this area is a prime location for truffle hunters, a much-loved ingredient of the local cuisine. A must-visit nearby town in the area is Narni, another hill town with a very ancient and rich history.



Amelia grew up around an ancient hill fort in what is now the southern Province of Terni



CASTELLO DI PANICALE

Type of property **Castello**
Number of bedrooms **5**
Price **€1,200,000**
Location **Panicale, historical centre**
Contact **tara@ilcastelloditara.com www.ilcastelloditara.com**

A few miles from Tuscany, with views of the Umbrian hills and Lake Trasimeno, this historic residence follows the curves of the city walls. It is characterized by its almost circular tower and its heavily fortified rectangular tower, its large Florentine coat of arms and loggia with arches resting on a very large bracketed base. Built in 1419 by Gigliani Diomedes, the castle is for sale with its 945 sqm of liveable space over 5 floors. It is in excellent condition. Renovated in 2006, it retains the original architectural features: brick and stone exterior; the interior has main entrances with antique gates, an internal stone staircase, decorated doors, wooden beams and vaulted ceilings. A very special place indeed.



APPARTAMENTO GAICHE

Type of property **Apartment**
Number of bedrooms **1**
Price **€98,000**
Location **Gaiche, Piegaro**
Contact **tara@ilcastelloditara.com www.ilcastelloditara.com**

This is an apartment on the second floor of old restored Castle of Gaiche. It is made up of living room with kitchenette and fireplace, bathroom and bedroom, and there is a communal garden and swimming pool. Gaiche is worth being remembered not only for its historical events but also for its statute of the year 1318, that is the oldest of Umbria and for being the birth-place of Beato Leopoldo. The oldest document about the place goes back until 1245 and it is in the banishment register containing the witchcrafts made under the reign of Giovanni Aldebrandi. The very well-kept residence is very close to the town of Castiglion Fosco and only 22km from the centre of Perugia.



The evening passeggiata in Perugia, the capital of Umbria

the strongest rental prospects of any Italian region. Countryside holidays and hilltown-focussed trips remain perennially popular. You could fairly safely factor reliable rentals into your overall budget considerations. Adriana Benedetti of Umbrian Property reports that, "My clients who rent out their houses tell me that they do cover most of their costs. It all depends on the marketing you do and also, for country rentals, the presence of a swimming pool, which is a big attraction for holiday renters."

In the summer months, you could reasonably expect €1,000 plus per week for rental of a country house with a pool. Rural rentals are viable from May to October, with spring and autumn weeks being a bit more difficult to fill. Umbria's wonderful hilltowns, meanwhile, have a longer rentals calendar, with more visitors throughout the non-summer months. A two-bedroom apartment in an Umbrian hilltown might get you €300-€500 per week – more if it's particularly large or luxurious.

The most desirable Umbrian hilltowns are numerous, and include places such as Assisi, Spoleto, Orvieto, Montefalco, Bevagna, Todi and Perugia. Note that Assisi is one of the world's great religious pilgrimage sites, with Christians visiting at all times of the year. Perugia, Umbria's regional capital, also offers especially rich rental pickings – both in the short and medium term. Tourists, students and visiting businesspeople are all potential rental clients in this beguiling old hilltop city with its Etruscan and Roman remains.

For visitors, Umbria is certainly not waning in popularity, and remains as loved as ever. Remember that the recent recession might have lowered the numbers of foreign property buyers in Umbria, but visitor numbers were unaffected. The charms that Umbria has to offer – peace, space, beauty, history, quality of life – are highly unlikely to become less desirable in the near or distant future. Thankfully, Umbria carefully protects those charms, with wise restrictions on building and development. This inspiring, unspoilt corner of the world looks set to maintain its enchantment. ■

Perugia offers especially rich rental pickings – both in the short and medium term

USEFUL CONTACTS

www.umbrianproperty.com
www.welchome.net
www.ilcastelloditara.com
www.homesitalia.co.uk
www.itili.com
www.welcomeservice.it



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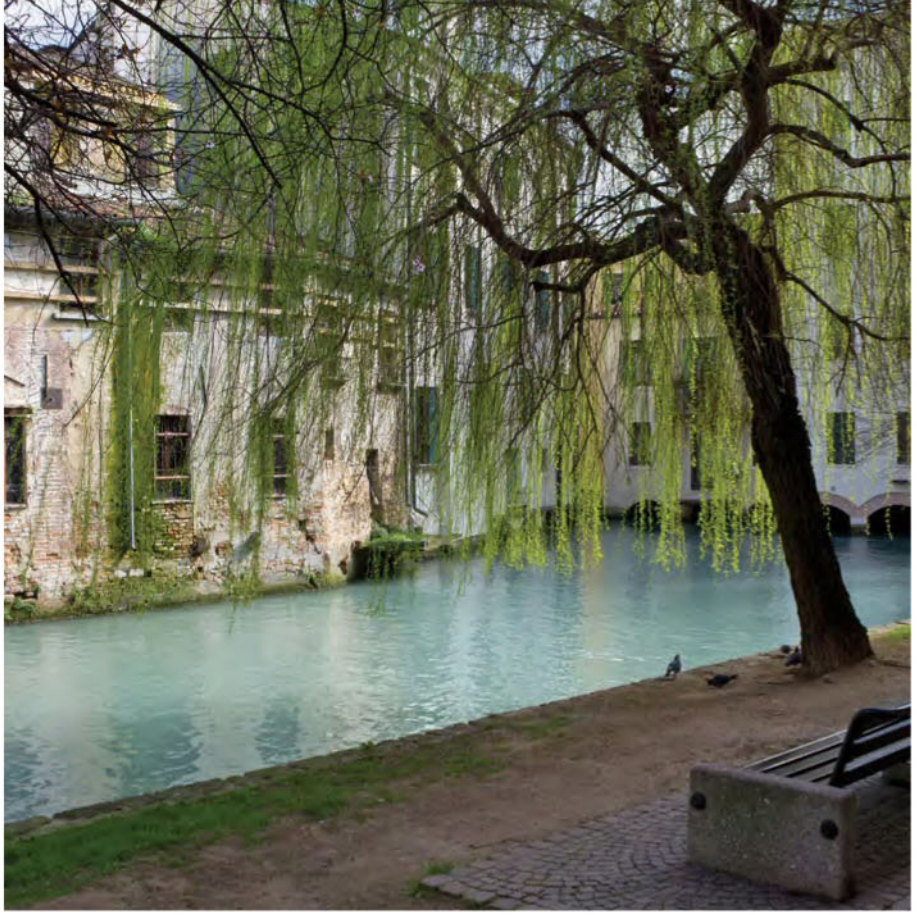
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Clockwise from top left: La Piazza dei Signori; weeping willows flank the canals; floral displays reflect in the water; the red radicchio of Treviso; the city offers many secluded corners; the waterways are still very much in use; café tables line an arcade; Treviso is a city best experienced on foot





Photography © iStock

48 HOURS IN...

Treviso

Many travellers see no more than the city's airport, but Treviso – 'The Painted City' – has a lot to offer. **Sara Scarpa** avoids the tourist trail to visit one of the lesser lights of Veneto...



Treviso is a name familiar to the millions of travellers who arrive and depart the *bel paese* using the conveniently located airport in the heart of the Veneto region, yet unfortunately, few will recall the city with family and friends on their return home. Treviso is still predominately a stepping stone to the more established locations in the region such as Padova, Verona, Vicenza and the gem itself, Venice. Padova, with its world renowned university and lively nightlife, Verona, with its Roman amphitheatre and Juliet's balcony, Vicenza, the City of Andrea Palladio, and Venice, the floating jewel of Italy, surely give substance for jumping straight onto the coach or train once stepping outside the airport...

Well, in many ways they do. However, you will be one of thousands doing so and with that you will fall into the trap of merely being a sightseer, bagging a photograph at St Mark's square, below Juliet's balcony or in a gondola. Treviso offers something, certainly all year round, that the others will not: freedom, and a real sense of what it is to experience a major northern Italian city without hordes of tourists. It is a city that boasts its own beauty, charm and uniqueness. And of course, it is also the city that gave the world prosecco and tiramisù!

Treviso is extremely picturesque and still provides glimpses of its glorious history. The city is encircled by impressive 16th century walls and criss-



WHAT TO SEE AND DO

LA CHIESA DI SAN NICOLÒ ❶
Via San Nicolò, 50
☎ **+39 0422 548626**
www.parrocchietreviso.it
A fine example of Italian Gothic architecture. The stunning frescoes by Tomaso da Modena and his scholars date to the 14th century. In the chapter house of the Monastery of San Nicolò is another great fresco cycle by Tomaso da Modena (1352) – which covers the whole perimeter of the room – representing the famous saints of the Dominicans. The artist depicts three monks with reading aids, one wearing rivet spectacles, the second using a reading glass and the third a reading glass on a stand. This is believed to be the first ever depiction of people wearing glasses.

LA CHIESA DI SAN FRANCESCO ❷
Piazza San Francesco
☎ **+39 0422 582182**
www.parrocchietreviso.it
http://frati-treviso.blogspot.it
This church, with its massive ship's keel roof dating back to the 13th century, houses the graves of Dante Alighieri's son and Francesco Petrarca's daughter.

DUOMO DI TREVISO ❸
Piazza del Duomo
www.parrocchietreviso.it
The Duomo di Treviso is Treviso's Cathedral. In its crypt you can admire extensive fragments of medieval frescoes but its masterpiece is the stunning *Malchiostro Annunciation*, one of Titian's finest works.

MUSEO SANTA CATERINA ❹
Piazzetta Mario Botter, 1
☎ **+39 0422 544864**
www.museicivicitreviso.it
The Museo Santa Caterina is a former church and a convent that has recently been restored to house the civic museum. Here, you will admire frescoes by Tomaso da Modena, an extensive archeological section and a gallery with 19th and 20th century paintings.

LOGGIA DEI CAVALIERI ❺
Via Martiri della Libertà
Situated on the corner of via Martiri della Libertà and via Indipendenza, in the heart of the historical centre of Treviso, the Loggia dei Cavalieri dates back to the 13th century. This peculiar building was originally used as a place reserved for the nobility to indulge in conversation, games and other pursuits.

CA' DEI CARRARESI ❻
Via Palestro, 33/38
Ca' Dei Carraresi is a stunning medieval building which now hosts important exhibitions and conferences.



La Chiesa di San Nicolò is the largest building in the city

DON'T MISS

TIRAMISÙ
This world famous dessert is said to have been invented in the 1970s by Ada Campoel, the former owner of a restaurant in the centre of Treviso called Alle Beccherie. She invented it with the help of her chef and the idea came from a dessert she used to eat as an energy boost while she was working and looking after her new born baby. Tiramisù means "pick-me-up" and with its layers of *savoiardi* (sponge fingers) dipped in coffee and a cream of eggs, mascarpone cheese and sugar, it certainly is.

crossed by small canals, where weeping willows appear almost to bow in homage to the beauty of the city. You will even find functioning water mills dotted along the canals and some art installations actually in the water.

Like most medieval cities, the best way to experience it is definitely on foot – while strolling along the cobbled streets you can admire pretty Renaissance squares, long arcades, frescoed house façades and stunning palaces. The splendour of the frescoes on the façades of the buildings gave the town its other pretty nickname *urbs picta* – the painted city. Although they are faded now, some of these frescoes are still visible and if you close your eyes you can imagine their colourful former glory.

The centre is very easy to reach – a short walk from the railway will take you right at the heart of the city, Piazza dei Signori. Here, you will immediately notice the majestic Palazzo dei Trecento (capped with Guelph crenellations) which is the most significant example of Romanesque architecture in town, and the symbol of Treviso. The huge crack in the building's façade is "a fake", or better, just a reminder of where it was damaged by the American bombings in the Second World War.

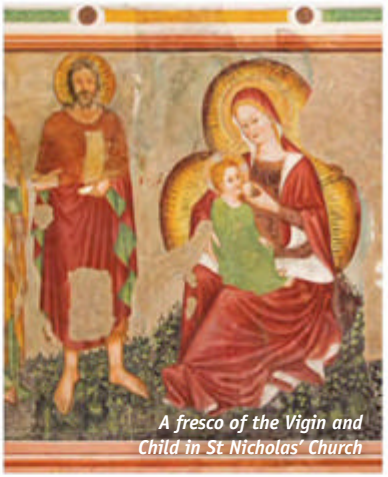
On the north side of the square is the Palazzo del Podestà, dominated by the great tower (Torre del Comune). The square with its pretty cafés is the *salotto di Treviso* (Treviso's "drawing room") where all the locals tend to meet for a spritz and *ciacole* (gossip). In a courtyard tucked behind Piazza dei Signori, in the Galleria della Strada Romana, is a replica of the famous Fontana delle Tette (the original "Fountain of the Tits" is in the Palazzo dei Trecento). The statue is well known,

Like most medieval cities, the best way to experience Treviso is definitely on foot





The Porta San Tomaso and the city's 16th century walls



A fresco of the Vigin and Child in St Nicholas' Church



La Fontana delle Tette

as once, throughout all of the 16th century and up until the end of the Serenissima Republic (1797), it used to spill red and white wine from its breasts for three whole days after the election of each new mayor. This is where the Trevigiani (the residents of Treviso) could once drink wine for free while cheering the new Podestà and where nowadays young people take selfies holding its breasts.

Just around the corner is Via Calmaggiore, the best spot for shopping. This elegant street offers great shops in a super classy setting. However, I am a true believer that for some serious shopping you need concentration, and in order to concentrate great food is needed... So for me the morning is reserved only for window shopping as my stomach is (as always!) the priority!

Walking in direction of Piazza San Vito with my family, we were looking at the different restaurants and *osterie* in search of inspiration... We decided to stop to have lunch at Cantinetta Venegazzù as we liked the friendly atmosphere and the great selection of wines. We ordered several starters to share and some typical local dishes. Our favourites, for sure, the *porchetta* (spit-roasted pork) and the *radicchio rosso di Treviso* (a variety of chicory typical of the area). Just before leaving we started chatting with some of the locals. Alberto, a Trevigiano DOC, was super friendly. He offered to take us with him on a short tour of the town. With his paisley shirt and his big smile, he is truly a character and everybody in town seems to know him.

Alberto started telling us about the place just in front of the restaurant where we had lunch. Here is where allegedly, tiramisù was invented. At the beginning of the '70s, the then owner of the restaurant Le Beccherie, with the help of her chef, invented the recipe of one of the most famous desserts ever. We then stopped for a quick *macchiato* just near the house of the founder of the Benetton Empire. Alberto was keen to show us his favourite restaurants and osterie and so this early afternoon turned quickly into an unconventionally early Prosecco crawl. Every stop at an osteria needed to be properly cherished by a kindly offered glass of Prosecco.

DON'T MISS

LA PESCHERIA
The fish market is located in one of the most characteristic places in the old centre of Treviso, in the middle of a small river island in the Canale Cagnan. The morning market offers fresh fish, seasonal vegetables and a great social gathering.

WHERE TO STAY

LOCANDA PONTE DANTE 7
Piazza Garibaldi, 6
☎ +39 0422 178 5946
www.locandapontedante.com
The Locanda is located in the centre of Treviso in a magnificent corner where the River Sile joins the Cagnan – *"dove Sile e Cagnan s'accompagna"*, as Dante wrote. The recently restored ancient structure is definitely full of charm. You must try the adjoining *osteria* offering excellent local dishes. This place is a little gem.

MAISON MATILDA 8
Via Jacopo Riccati, 44
☎ +39 0422 582212
www.maisonmatilda.com
This is a small luxury hotel located right in the centre of Treviso, near the Ca' dei Carraresi Museum and Piazza dei Signori. Kids up to 8 years old can stay for free. You can have breakfast at any time of the day and wherever you prefer! If you choose room number 6, "La Musica", you will find a Bang & Olufsen Multi CD player.

19 BORGO CAVOUR DESIGN B&B TREVISO 9
Borgo Cavour, 19
☎ +39 0422 419145
http://19borgocavourtreviso.it
If you like your hotels "boutique", try 19 Borgo Cavour, a small property in the centre of Treviso offering nice design rooms and an indoor garden.

RELAIS VILLA FIORITA 10
Via Papa Giovanni XXIII
Monastier di Treviso
☎ +39 0422 898008
www.villafiorita.it
This hotel is located in a small village in the Venetian Villas area between Venice and Treviso (some 12 km from Treviso). Laid out in classic Venetian style, the villa is perfect if you are planning to relax in the park and swimming pool. Made famous by Ernest Hemingway's stay here.



Treviso is the proud home of tiramisù

WHERE TO EAT

CANTINETTA VENEGAZZÙ 11
Piazza Ancillotto Giannino, 2
☎ + 39 0422 55287
This *enoteca* (wine bar) offers a friendly atmosphere and a great selection of wines and fresh food. You can opt for *cicchetti* or you can sit down and enjoy a full hot meal.
€ €

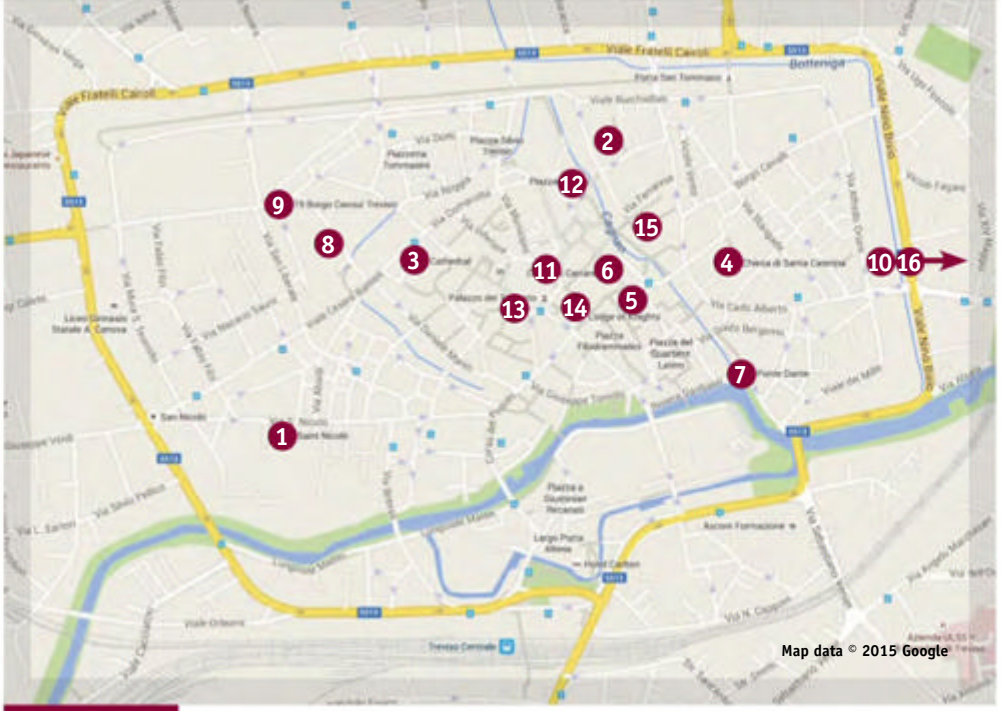
ODEON ALLA COLONNA 12
Vicolo Rinaldi, 3
☎ + 39 0422 541012
www.odeonlacolonna.it
In a magical quiet corner facing the river Cagnan, this restaurant offers a charming atmosphere. The historical building with its great interior design has a romantic outdoor area where you can dine al fresco.
€ €

OSTERIA DALLA GIGIA 13
Via Barberia, 20
☎ + 39 0422 582752
A busy *osteria* that has become an institution in Treviso. You will probably have to queue but it is worth it to enjoy the tasty *mozzarella in carrozza* – a golden-crust fried mozzarella sandwich – and the amazing *tramezzini*.
€ €

OSTERIA DAI NANETI 14
Vicolo Broli, 2
☎ + 39 340 378 3158
www.osteriadainaneti.it
This osteria, always packed with locals, has a great atmosphere and a unique character. Refuel yourself with the tasty *cicchetti* and a glass of wine.
€ €

OSTERIA MUSCOLI 15
Via Pescheria, 23
☎ + 39 0422 583390
Famous for the tasty hot *panino al prosecco* – a small, soft *panino* soaked in prosecco and then filled with mascarpone, Gorgonzola, formaggio latteria and mortadella.
€ €

RISTORANTE BASILISCO 16
Via Bison, 34
☎ + 39 0422 541822
www.ristorantebasilisco.com
The chef, Diego Tomasi, has great experience working in Venice, Milan, Florence, New York, London and France. He creates local traditional dishes presented in a modern way. His menu changes every day depending on the fresh local produce purchased in the morning. The restaurant's wine list has grown together with the kitchen and today includes around 370 different wines.
€ €





DON'T MISS

IL RADICCHIO ROSSO DI TREVISO
This is a member of the chicory family cultivated only in the area around Treviso. The designation IGP, given to both varieties, *tardivo* and *precoce*, refers to the EU regulation that allows only products grown within a designated area to use this product name. The different varieties of the red radicchio di Treviso are all the result of the patient process of whitening obtained by submerging the heads for several days after harvest in circulating spring water, a process that helped preserve the radicchio. Because of its white and red veining and the fact that it is seasonal, the radicchio is often described as a "winter flower" – it appears in the markets in late November.

In one of the osterie I was told that in order to see Treviso properly one must see it as locals do... I am still wondering if the guy who told me this meant that this is possible only after a few drinks or only with the relaxed pace of life and a smile on the face which is typical of the Trevigiani... Perhaps both!

We walked towards the Buranelli, the most picturesque corner in Treviso. The canal takes its name from the storehouse once owned by fishermen coming from the island of Burano, in the Venetian lagoon. The calm waterway, almost touched by the weeping willow, the long arcades, and the work of art by Mario Martinelli – which covers the wall of the house where the writer Giovanni Comisso once lived – create a lovely view that is the subject of many paintings.

Finally, we headed towards the town's walls and said goodbye to our wonderful guide. We then followed the green ring encircling the walls, looking at the swans and at some very cute ducklings hiding under their mum's wings.

The following day – after a relaxing evening dining at Odeon alla Colonna – we hired bikes and cycled for miles along the river, completely surrounded by nature. The itinerary, taking us all the way to Casale del Sile, starts from the place where the *burci* once used to stop. The burci were big wooden boats dragged by horses and oxen that used to transport goods from Venice to Treviso. The itinerary follows the path that was used by the animals along the River Sile. Midway along the path is a very interesting view: the "Cemetery of the Burci". This is the place where, in the '70s, all the boats were left to sink as a protest against the arrival of the road transport that stole their jobs. Today, this is a charming place when you can observe different species of birds and fish and just simply enjoy the beauty of nature.

Not only does Treviso offer a great historical centre, it also offers a perfect starting point to explore the panorama of the Marca Trevigiana (the area around Treviso). The place known as the original production area for Prosecco – the Prosecco Wine Route – is the most popular wine route in Italy. If you hire a car you will be able to discover the land between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene, which offers a patchwork of vineyards, stunning views with ancient castles, charming churches and noble villas. You can visit beautiful old villages and wineries where you will learn everything about the method of Prosecco making and you will test the superior quality of the world famous sparkling white wine. ■

The land between Conegliano and Valdobbiadene offers a patchwork of vineyards



A monument commemorating a mention of Treviso in Dante's Commedia



The red radicchio makes many an appearance in the city's restaurants



Bicycles are common transport in Treviso

GETTING THERE

➤ **BY PLANE**
Ryanair flies direct to Treviso from Bristol, East Midlands, Leeds Bradford and London Stansted.

➤ **BY TRAIN**
Treviso is well connected by rail to Venice and other cities in the Veneto region and beyond. For more details visit www.trenitalia.it



The vineyards of Valdobbiadene

➤ **KEY TO RESTAURANT PRICES**
(full meal per person, not including wine)
€ Up to €25
€ € €26-€50
€ € € More than €50

The Grotesque Style

The term Grotesque derives from the caves, or grotte, where Renaissance builders unearthed this ancient form

THE GROTESQUE STYLE WAS ALL THE RAGE during the 1500s for both interiors and exteriors all over Italy. It continued to be so for the following two centuries. Nowadays, when the word is mentioned, negative images of unfortunate distorted images of nature and horrific representations of creatures, humans and beasts, are usually conjured up. However, this negative conception is a relatively modern distortion of the original significance of the name describing one of the most imaginative Renaissance decorations – which was anything but negative, rather wonderfully playful and elegant.

The Grotesque decorative style dates to Ancient Rome and was the decorative décor of choice covering the walls and ceilings of the wealthy homes. It was rediscovered in Rome during Renaissance period while the city was undergoing a construction boom.

Digging down to lay foundations for the magnificent new Renaissance palatial residences, they unearthed much ancient statuary and the remains of ancient Roman buildings. During the 1480s, what remained of the Ancient Roman Emperor Augustus' palace and that of Nero were discovered. The Grotesque style had decorated their walls. What remained of these buildings was completely covered under many feet of landfill after centuries of the Tiber with the build up of silt creating a much elevated ground level.

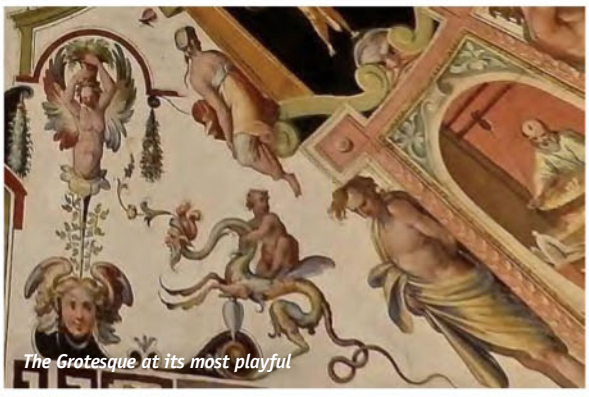
These discoveries fascinated everyone. Italy was extremely interested in the Ancient World at this time; there was a revival of interest in all things Classical and this was an unbelievably exciting discovery as very few examples of pictorial decoration from the ancient world had survived. Artists, armed with fire torches, descended to what reminded them of underground caves and copied these wall decorations. Raphael rendered them famous in the Vatican palace commissioned by the



Detail at the Strozzi chapel



Detail of the Uffizi Gallery top floor ceiling



The Grotesque at its most playful





The Strozzi family chapel in Florence

Pope (the Vatican loggias). Perugino (the master of Raphael), Domenico Ghirlandaio (the fresco and painting master of Michelangelo), Pinturicchio and Filippino Lippi – who introduced Florence to the Grotesque at the Strozzi family chapel (1489-1502) in the Santa Maria Novella Church – among so many more of the most important masters of the day, made the pilgrimage to these underground 'caves' to copy the designs and then incorporate them in their commissions of family chapels, private homes and the exteriors of buildings all over the Italian peninsula. These cave-like places, or *grotte*, gave birth to the name of the decorative style, *grottesco* in Italian.

The Grotesque is characterised by strangeness or imaginative forms, usually displaying a combination of half-man half-beast creations, zoomorphic figures and mythological creatures, depicted with a strong, sinuous line fluidity. It represented an unknown aspect of the Ancients to Renaissance man. The Ancients, so admired and emulated for their grammar of classical rules and order, were not associated with this show of playfulness, this light-hearted and unregulated side as seen in the Grotesque.

In the 18th century the term Grotesque in English took on a much broader meaning and became associated with caricature and in particular, associated with over-emphasis on the bizarre and ridiculous. During the Age of Reason and Neo Classicism, this meditation on imaginative strangeness and the lack of structure was viewed as abnormal and against the order of nature. Thus, the negative connotation was born.

The grotesques from the 1500s in Italy are a delight: the Piccolomini library inside the cathedral of Siena, the ceiling of the top floor of the Uffizi gallery and in the Grand duke's rooms in the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, in the Vatican palace and the Villa d'Este (just outside Rome), just to name a few of some of the outstanding examples of masterpiece Grotesque work all over the country. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER

FREYA MIDDLETON is a private tour guide and writer who lives in Florence, Tuscany. You can read her blog online or learn more about her tours at www.freyasflorence.com

Photography © Freya Middleton

THE SPA RESORTS OF TUSCANY

Seeking out peace and tranquillity, **Catherine Sidwell** experiences a thermal wellness tour in southern Tuscany…



Whether visitors seek to discover the pleasures of thermal bathing for general relaxation, as an antidote to busy lives and stress, or to alleviate a range of ailments, dedicated enthusiasts are returning. It is easy to see why.



Photograph © Hotel Posta Marcucci

Night time view of the swimming pool at the Hotel Posta Marcucci *(see page 46)*

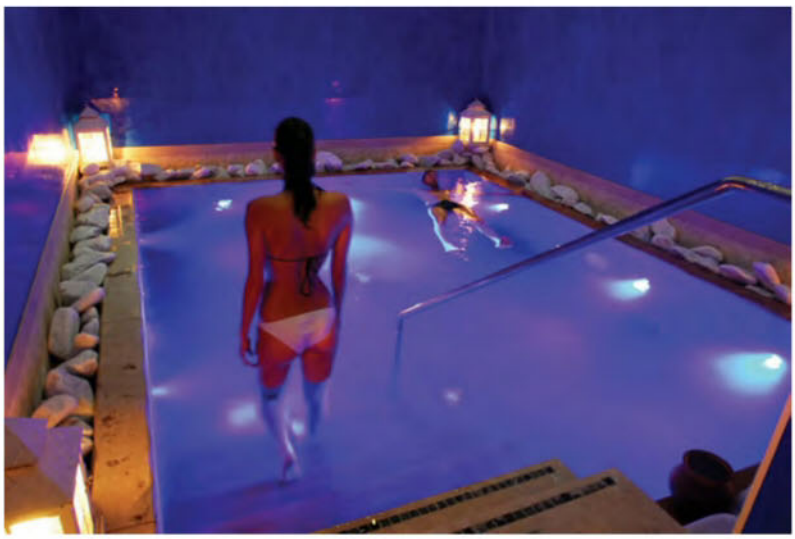


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Read the hotel's guide before using the spa. It gives recommendations on care, thermal pool advice, the properties of spa water from immersion or as a drink on skin, the cardiovascular system, nervous system, respiratory tract, liver, stomach and intestine, and how to get the best spa experience.

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Luca Molinario







Photography on these pages © Fonteverde Natural Spa Resort, unless otherwise stated

Above: The Bioaquam at the Fonteverde Natural Spa Resort. From left: The resort's Thalaquam floating pool; breakfast is served on the terrace; a dip in the outdoors infinity pool



Photography © Tuscany on the Road







My guide's sporty, black Alfa Romeo Giulietta paused at the end of a narrow avenue of pine trees. After an early evening drive from Florence, we had arrived at the exclusive 5-star Fonteverde Tuscan Resort and Spa. Here, at this grand countryside residence formerly owned by the Medici family, all is peace and tranquility.

Southeast of Siena, on the edge of the pretty village of San Casciano dei Bagni, Fonteverde is a member of the prestigious Leading Hotels of the World consortium. Recognised for excelling in health and wellbeing experiences, a recent award includes the Spafinder Wellness Travel Award – Country Winner, 2014.

At reception, I receive a warm welcome. The foyer, lined with historical portraits is furnished with handsome antique settees and armchairs. I agree to meet Luca, my guide, the following morning. He has arranged a tour for me that includes spa experiences and tastings of locally produced organic foods and wines.

The next day, I awake as the sun rises slowly in a cloudless sky. Lilac shadows shift across the valley. In the distance, Mount Amiata still has snow on its peak. Surveying the grounds, I decide to take an early morning dip in the open-air infinity pool.

An internal corridor connects the hotel and the spa area. Guests can access the pools and treatment facilities in plush towelling bathrobes, bathing costumes and spa slippers. Stepping into the outdoor pool, steam lifts and evaporates above the surface. First in, I swim in silence, except for the calls of swallows flying overhead. There is something so comforting about bathing in the warmth of the 38°C thermal water. The temperature, stillness and density slow one's body movements and thoughts. Bliss.

PSYCHO-PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

One of the three Italian Hospitality Collection (IHC) hotel temples to wellness, Fonteverde is dedicated to psycho-physical well-being. It had already begun to work its wonders. At the edge of the infinity pool, I gazed at the surrounding hills and wondered about the responses of bathers over the centuries.

The province of Tuscany has many hot springs. Legend has it that an Etruscan king founded the baths at San Casciano. They were popular with the Romans, who exploited curative properties of the thermal waters – Augustus is reputed to have frequented the baths. In the Middle Ages visitors travelled here from across Europe. In recent years wellness and health pursuits have become a priority. Cristiana Capotondi, the Italian actor, discovered Fonteverde in 2007 and has visited ever since.

A desire to share extensive knowledge and his passion for Tuscany's natural resources, traditions and culture led Luca Molinario to create *Tuscany on the Road* in 2010. "I want visitors to enjoy Tuscany as those who were born and live here do," he explains.

At 10.30am, I set off with Luca on a journey through the gentle landscape of the Val d'Orcia. Protected as a UNESCO World Heritage site, the unspoilt countryside retains views painted by Renaissance artists.

Terme Sensoriali

A THREE AND A HALF HOUR VISIT is recommended to complete one of the suggested programmes with dwell times for each section. Relaxing: to ease anxiety, tension headaches and stress. Energising: to alleviate lack of energy, weakness of the immune system, uneasiness, insomnia and panic attacks. Purifying: to clear toxins from an unhealthy lifestyle. Rebalancing: to rebalance the body, soul and mind. Reservations required. Admission prices are at midweek and weekend rates.

Terme Sensoriali
Parco Acqua Santa
Piazza Martiri Perugini
Chianciano Terme
Siena
Tuscany
☎ +39 0578 68480/68484
www.termesensoriali.it
prenotazione@termechianciano.it



















Clockwise from top left: The outdoor bath circuit at the Terme Sensoriali; cheeses at the Podere Il Casale; outside the Podere Il Casale; Mirella's pici; a tour of the Santa Giulia wine cellar. Left: Inside the Terme Sensoriali

Photography on these pages © Terme Sensoriali, unless otherwise stated

A DAY'S EXCURSION

My first day's excursion is to an organic farm between Pienza and Montepulciano. Podere Il Casale produces pecorino and caprino cheese from the milk of their own sheep and goats. A Swiss couple bought the farm in 1991 and continue traditions and skills learned from the previous farmer. Their son Michael helps to run the business. They also produce honey, olive oil, breads, pasta and wines. After an educational tour of the dairy, Michael attentively guides us through a tasting of their fresh unpasteurised cheeses, paired with a selection of honeys.

We travel on to the lively spa town of Chianciano, which borders Montepulciano, Pienza and Chiusi. In the 5th century BC, Etruscans built a temple here to the God of Good Health. In Roman times, Horace visited the area on advice from his physician. During the 20th century the town experienced considerable development. The film director Federico Fellini loved Chianciano – it even inspired his 1963 film *8½*.

Luca has selected a 21st century spa experience for my afternoon. Designed by the architect Paolo Bodega, a pupil of Renzo Piano, this contemporary spa based on the principles of naturopathy is dedicated to the senses. It promotes "a wave of well-being for the body and a burst of energy to the mind". There are relaxing, energising, purifying and rebalancing programmes to choose from – the Hydromassage Bath, Sensorial Bath, Finnish Sauna, Aromatherapy Room, Room of Interior Silence, as well as the outdoor bath circuit and relaxation areas.

LUNCH WITH FAY

The following day I meet Fay, one of Luca's guides. She moved to Tuscany from England ten years ago for family lifestyle and health choices. "One of the reasons for moving here was for the children to grow up in the countryside, eating local, seasonal, organic and unprocessed foods." Our lunchtime destination proves to be an example of the difference in freshness and taste.

After a tour of the Santa Giulia wine cellar with Gianluca, we meet Mirella, his mother, who has just prepared lunch. At a large wooden table in the farmhouse we tasted their smooth Brunello di Montalcino Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita (DOCG) wines from 2008 and 2012. We also sampled Cinta Senese from their Tuscan pigs.

Mirella's fabulous *pici* had slight indentations made by lovingly hand rolling the long strands of pasta. As we finish, we indulge in *scarpetta* (to mop up the delicious ragù sauce with bread). This meets with approving looks. As the sun sets, we journey home happy and content.

GETTING THERE

➤ BY PLANE

The nearest airport is Perugia (Ryanair from Stansted). The alternatives are Florence (150km away) and Rome (200km).

➤ BY TRAIN

There is a railway station at Chiusi, 20 minutes from San Casciano dei Bagni.

Hotel Posta Marcucci

SWIM IN THE OPEN AIR with views overlooking the Val d'Orcia and Rocca di Tentennano. A family hotel where you can also feel at home, choose a bedroom with a view across the valley. The welcoming sitting rooms include displays of family portraits, photographs, china and glass. Bookshelves have plenty of reading matter to refer to during winter months, although it's fun to swim in the snow! There is also an indoor pool. Massage and beauty treatments are available.

Hotel Posta Marcucci
Via Ara Urcea, 43
53027 Bagno Vignoni
Siena
Tuscany
☎ +39 0577 887112
www.hotelpostamarcucci.it
info@hotelpostamarcucci.it









Clockwise from top left: The thermal pool at the Hotel Posta Marcucci; Bagno Vignoni; the Hotel Posta Marcucci's sitting room; outside the hotel; panoramic views beyond the outdoor pool

Photography on these pages © Hotel Posta Marcucci, unless otherwise specified



AROMATHERAPY

On my final day, I enjoy a leisurely morning in the Fonteverde Spa. I float in 37°C saline water in the Thalaquam. This treatment relaxes the body and re-balances energy. After lying down for a rest on a recliner, cosily wrapped in my robe, I lie horizontal again for a massage using aromatherapy oils. By the time I met Luca I felt totally rejuvenated.

We drive to Bagno Vignoni, situated between Montalcino and Pienza. I have been looking forward to re-visiting this tiny hilltop village where pilgrims rested from their travels on The Via Francigena to Rome. St Catherine of Siena and Pope Pius II also visited the thermal baths here.

It was the vision and determination of Licia Marcucci, with support from her sister, brother and family, that breathed new life into a long-standing family hotel business. Riccardo and Leonardo Marcucci (great-great grandsons of Agostino, who started the business in 1886, and nephews of the enterprising Licia) now manage Hotel Posta Marcucci.

Riccardo makes me an espresso at the bar. Seated on a sofa he turns the pages of a family photo album and speaks with the enthusiasm and delight of the small child (himself) in the pictures. In 1956 his aunt Licia had an ambition to build a new hotel with an outdoor pool for visitors to enjoy the natural thermal waters all year round. Licia, Leone and Agostino worked hard to expand the hotel in stages, as funds permitted. His aunts became famous for their cooking and the welcoming, homely atmosphere attracted celebrity guests such as Fellini and the actor Valentina Cortese – who is now 92, so it worked well enough for her!

"It's strange, we are Italians, we have the culture of the Romans – the culture of thermalism, but the first guests were Germans, Austrians, Swiss and Dutch. I don't know how my aunts were able to speak with them. However, they understood everything. We have guests who have been coming from Europe for 38 years. The Italians didn't really start visiting until the 1990s. Then it was like a 'mode', a fashion."

My final thermal bathe is here. The pool at Hotel Posta Marcucci was my first introduction to this ancient land of hot springs over 20 years ago. Things have changed since then. Italy now has many more spa and wellness experiences to be explored to rejuvenate the body, mind and spirit, just as the Etruscans and Romans discovered all those long centuries ago. ■

INFORMATION

➤ SPA TIPS

The therapeutic properties of thermal waters vary. Efficacy is dependent on the type of treatment, duration and repetition. Speak to a medical practitioner first, especially if pregnant. Shower caps protect hair from sulphur vapour. Best times for visiting thermal baths are spring, autumn and winter.

➤ CATHERINE'S HOSTS

Catherine was a guest of Fonteverde, Hotel Posta Marcucci and Tuscany on the Road, with whom she experienced a three-day thermal wellness tour.

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Take home your own delicacies, vacuum-packed for convenience and conservation. **www.laserenaumbria.com/Italian-baking from £550 per person.**

OLIVE PICKING

11-15 NOVEMBER

Picking olives on Umbrian slopes flooded by warm autumn sunshine is an unbeatable experience. In small groups we surround each tree with nets, then comb through the silky leaves, enjoying the sound of plump olives dropping to the ground around us – happy chatter and laughter abound.

After a tasty lunch with crisp local wines, we visit local places of interest and spectacular scenery relating to the noble Umbrian olive and its fragrant oil, finishing each day with a delicious gourmet dinner.

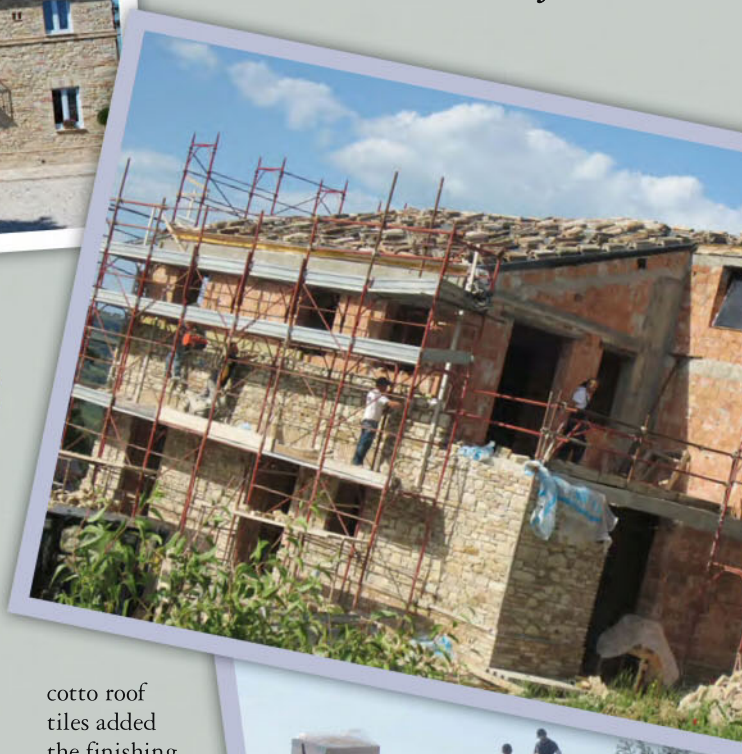
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CONTACT DETAILS

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Building the Dream

In the latest instalment of her rebuild diaries, **Jane Smith** and her husband Richard add a swimming pool and lay the insulation for their cotto tile roof to be laid upon…



Jane Smith runs an estate agency in Le Marche: www.magicmarche.com. You can contact Jane at: jane@magicmarche.com. Richard runs a restoration management company: www.smithpropertyconsultancy.com You can contact Richard at: richard@smithprops.com

The pool zone was now taking shape; it was very exciting, particularly for our three daughters. We pegged out the area around the pool where we wanted the sunbathing area to be and made it an irregular shape to be visually more interesting. The whole zone was then covered with gravel and grids of iron were laid over the gravel. Finally the cement mixer arrived again to pour the concrete on top. This gave us a really strong and flat pool surround. The final touch, some weeks later, would be the laying of hand-made old cotto tiles and the building of a beautiful curved wall defining the pool zone.

Meanwhile the plumber arrived to commence his work. Dino (nicknamed Smurf because of the beanie hat he always wore) set to work running the water and waste pipes around the house, including fitting Geberit toilet flush cisterns into cavities in the five bathroom walls. Eventually all this floor level pipework would be covered with a layer of light concrete and fixed permanently under the floors; it was therefore very important to make no errors with the positioning.

Up on the roof a thick, impermeable weather proof sheet was being put over the tongue and groove ceiling; then big squares of insulation were stuck into place, covering the entire roof. We went for insulation 12cm thick to prevent heat loss through the roof in the cold months. We put sheets 8cm thick around all the exterior walls for the same reason.

Once the insulation was in place on the roof, another impermeable sheet was put in place on top, then old cotto roof tiles added the finishing touch. We had a roof! The pretty chimneys would be built next month.

The team now started in earnest on the exterior walls. The aforementioned insulation layer was put between the red building blocks and the facing of old stones, giving us an overall wall thickness of 70cm – incredibly thick and meaning the house would retain its internal heat in the winter, and in the hot summer the intense external heat would take a long time to penetrate through. As this work progressed the house took on its beautiful old feel. You can see this transformation in the photos at the top of the page.

The sun was shining throughout June and we were on schedule. We had one more month to go before the traditional August shut-down, so Richard and I sat with a glass of chilled Verdicchio and a bowl of our own olives and planned the priorities for July. ❗







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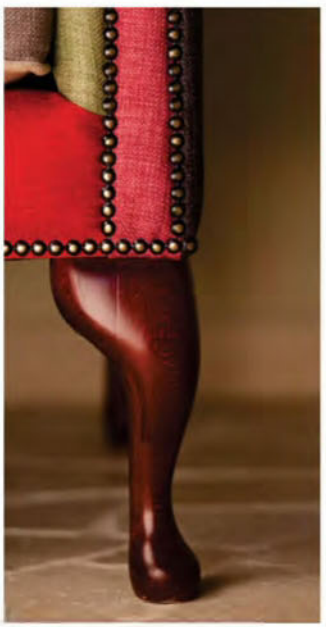
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Price **from £70,000 for a 1/10th (5 weeks') share**
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ifh@appassionata.com www.appassionata.com



€10,000-€50,000

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CASA GELSO

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Price **€299,000**
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PETRITOLI FARMHOUSE

An attractive, part-restored traditional farmhouse in a glorious rural location yet within minutes of Petritoli, one of the most popular historic towns of the region. This 4 bedroom, 2 bathroom charming property is immediately habitable, allowing the owner to enjoy occupation now and complete the full restoration as and when required. Many original materials have been used in this careful and sympathetic restoration. One of the delightful aspects of this property is its wonderfully tranquil setting and outstanding views of the surrounding medieval hilltop towns of Petritoli, Moregnano, Ponzano di Fermo and Fermo in the distance. House number 514.

Price **€285,000** *Contact* ☎ **+39 331 381 9509**
info@magicmarche.com www.magicmarche.com



SMERILLO COUNTRY HOUSE

A magnificent country house in a beautiful elevated location near Smerillo with some of the finest views of the Marche region. Set within 8.75 acres of land which includes a private equestrian centre and beautiful pool, this prestigious 4 bedroom, 4 bathroom country residence has been built and finished to the highest standards and exudes a feeling of space and luxury throughout. All main rooms are very generously proportioned and enjoy stunning views of Le Marche's rolling hills and medieval towns, the Sibillini Mountains, and the Adriatic Sea in the distance. House number 618.

Price **€799,000** *Contact* ☎ **+39 331 381 9509**
info@magicmarche.com www.magicmarche.com



€500,000-€750,000

VILLA IL LUPO

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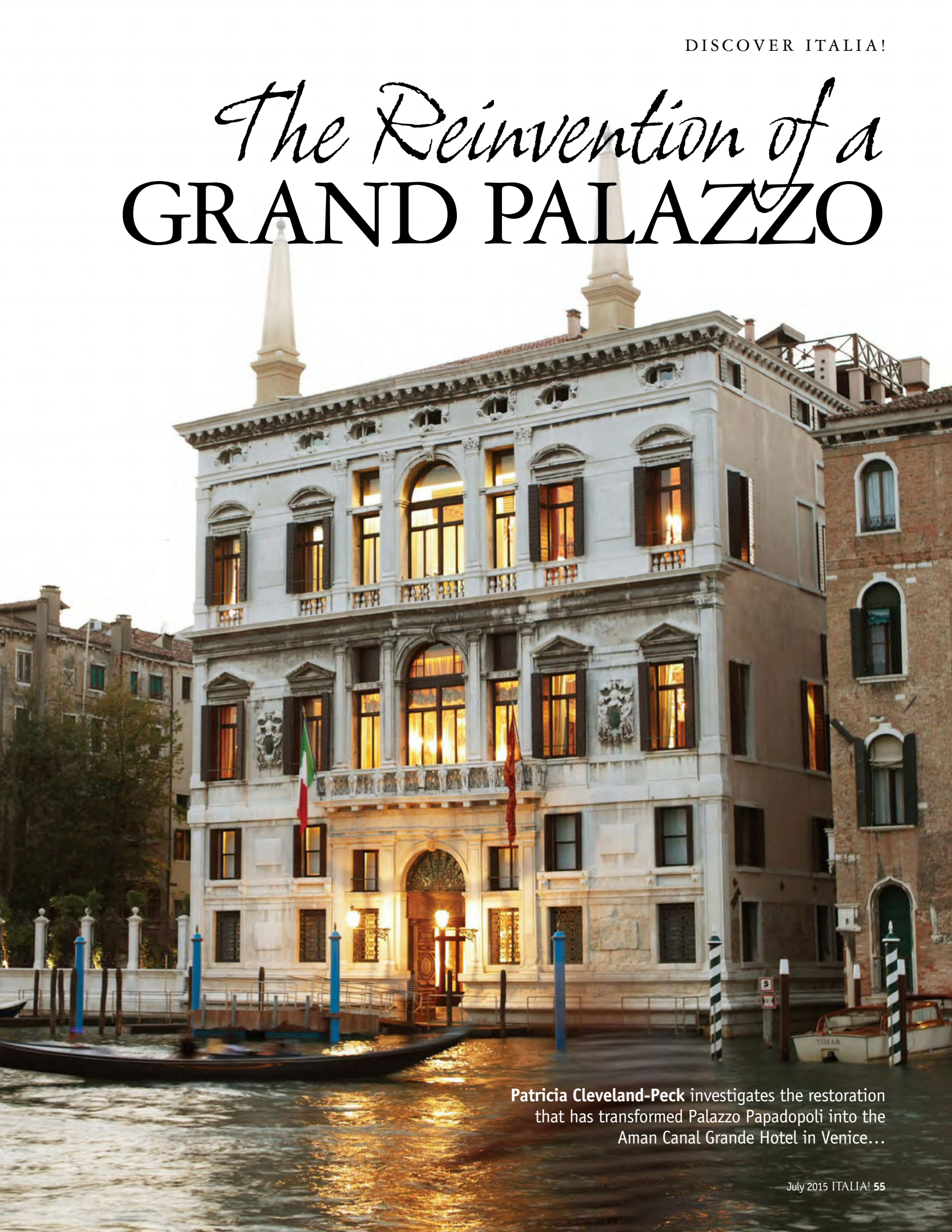
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The Reinvention of a GRAND PALAZZO



Patricia Cleveland-Peck investigates the restoration that has transformed Palazzo Papadopoli into the Aman Canal Grande Hotel in Venice…

I simply waited until a man typed the code at the big gate and sneaked in after him



The staircase where your author first met the Contessa



The Piano Nobile dining room

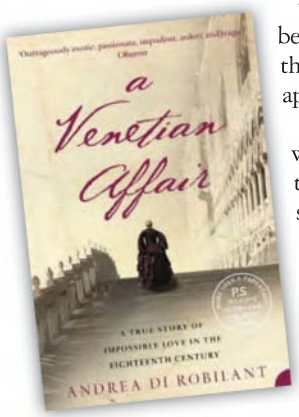
Photography © Aman Resorts, unless otherwise stated

I had trespassed into the home of Bianca Arrivabene, Contessa by marriage to Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga, whose family had lived in the palazzo for four generations

It really all comes down to the writer Andrea di Robilant: if he hadn't written the book *A Venetian Affair*, which tells the story of a doomed love between a Venetian nobleman and an English girl in the 18th century, and if, some eight years ago, I hadn't been writing an article about this book, I should never have ventured into the Palazzo Papadopoli.

Venture I did however, quite illicitly, as I wanted to see the window from which the lover waved to his beloved across the little canal which ran between his grand palace and the house the English family had rented.

I noticed that the *palazzo* had obviously seen better days and that most of it appeared to be let offices. People were going about their business and so I simply waited until a man typed the code at the big gate and sneaked in after him.



All was going well. I found a staircase with windows facing in the right direction – when I was caught. A tall, attractive young woman introduced herself as the owner. I was mortified. When however, I explained about the article, she couldn't have been more friendly.

She told me that in fact di Robilant was a friend of hers, and no – this was not the right spot. To cut a long story short she took me to the correct window and then she showed me round some of the other rooms, including the ballroom where I remember seeing wonderful frescoes and ceilings by Giambattista Tiepolo, widely recognised as the greatest decorative artist of the period.

It was not until later, in order to prove myself, that I asked for her address so I could send her a copy of my article, that I discovered I had trespassed into the home of Bianca Arrivabene, Contessa by marriage to Giberto Arrivabene Valenti Gonzaga, whose family had lived in the palazzo for four generations,



The Stanza del Tiepolo, the 'Game Room'



The house is as famous for its gardens as it is for its interior décor



The Tiepolo family developed the house's library



Chef Riccardo de Prà's exquisite desserts

Photograph © Patricia Cleveland-Peck

Aman Resorts manages the 7-star luxury hotel while Giberto and Bianca retain the freehold and live on the top floor



The Alcova Tiepolo Suite is adorned with ceiling frescoes

and a Princess of the Royal House of Savoia-Aosta in her own right.

Palazzo Papadopoli is truly grand, one of the eight *palazzi monumentali* in Venice. It was built in 1550 for the Coccina family by Gian Giacomo de Grigi, a follower of Sansovino. In 1718 it was sold to the Tiepolo family, who filled it with treasures and built up a great library as well as commissioning the frescoes and ceilings I had seen.

In the 19th century the palazzo was bought by the Papadopoli family from Corfu and one of the two brothers married Maddalena Aldo Brandolini, who came from a wealthy Venetian family of intellectuals. One of the things they did was to buy the two adjacent properties and raze them to the ground in order to create the largest gardens on the Grand Canal. They also hired the architect Girolamo Levi to completely restore the building and he in turn employed Michelangelo Guggenheim to decorate the grandest floor of the palazzo, the *piano nobile*, which he executed in the most sumptuous style.

At the end of the century, Vera Papadopoli Aldobrandini married Count Giberto Arrivabene, bringing the palazzo with her as her dowry. By the 1920s they had lost much of their money and most of their estates on the mainland but life here continued in grand style. They were also in the vanguard of modernity, installing a telephone system, electric light and one of the first lifts in Venice.

It is Vera's grandson Giberto, husband of Bianca, who now owns the palazzo. As an example of how things of course have changed over the years, Giberto remembers that when his father was growing up 86 people lived in the palazzo; six were family members, the remaining 80, household staff.

Giberto still owns the palazzo and he, Bianca and their children still live on the top floor. Even when the upkeep was devouring their finances and they knew that "something had to happen", they did not want to move and so when Adrian Zecha, the creator of Aman Resorts, approached them and agreed to rent the palazzo rather than buy it, Giberto agreed. It took some years to find investors and clinch



The Red Dining Room looks over the hotel's Canal Garden

the deal but now Aman manages the 7-star luxury hotel while the family retain the freehold.

In spite of the building's enormous size there are only 24 guest suites (which cost from €1,100 to €3,200 per night) and this, together with the fact that there is no exterior signage denoting that it is a hotel and, in traditional Aman style, no desk, reinforces the idea that you are entering a family home.

As we were already in Venice we did not arrive as most guests do, whisked by the complimentary service of a private water taxi from the airport directly to the hotel's *porta d'acqua* on the Grand Canal. No, it seemed fitting that we should enter by the back gate as I did years before. This time, however, I noticed that it was newly painted and gave onto a smart new garden.

Once inside the reception hall and welcomed with hand towels, a drink and a short exploration, we at once noticed the sheer quality of the restoration. The main staircase rises through two levels to the *piano nobile* on entering and you cannot fail to be almost overwhelmed by the beauty of the rooms. The ballroom, bar and two dining rooms, with walls covered with Rubelli silks, contain the exquisite frescoes now impeccably revitalised, as are the magnificent Murano glass chandeliers. There can be no better place to watch the gondolas passing on the Grand Canal than from this room.

Another staircase leads up to the Salon, a quiet lounge with equally lovely views of the canal. Here a grand piano and comfortable sofas make for relaxation and enjoyment of the many opulent coffee table books and magazines on display.

Next to this is a library containing the family's collection. It also contains a rare panel of gold-embossed Cordoba leather dating from the 16th century. When time came to work on repairing this panel, tiny fragments of leather were found behind it, as if stored there in waiting for the restorers 400 years later.

Of course we did not take all this in at once. We settled into our comfortable room on the ground floor and informed ourselves of all that was on offer. Amongst the luxurious suites is the Alcova, with painted chinoiserie walls and a Tiepolo ceiling – this used to be Giberto's mother's bedroom. There is a state-of-the-art spa and of course the spacious gardens. The hotel has also put together some innovative excursions in which guests are accompanied by local writers, garden experts and art historians, often to places not normally open to the public.

We however, were soon keen to make our own excursion to the Red Dining room for dinner by Riccardo de Prà. It was Chef de Prà who prepared George Clooney's wedding breakfast at the hotel in 2014 and whose restaurant in the Dolomites holds the oldest Michelin star in Italy. He turned out to be the jolliest and most charming of men and he came and discussed our requirements with us before presenting us with a delectable meal.

As a starter we were offered a series of little dishes which included roasted razor clams with Lake Garda olive oil; gently smoked tuna tartare and avocado; artichoke salad with fresh pecorino cheese; liver pâté *alla veneziana* with red herbs, cinnamon crumble and hazelnuts; pan fried calamari with red onions and beans


Chinoiserie walls in the living room of the Alcova Tiepolo Suite


The Yellow Dining Room features a magnificent fireplace


The Altana Roof Terrace affords views of the city


Chef Riccardo de Prà

Photograph © Patricia Cleveland-Peck

With the future secure the palazzo must be satisfied that its beautiful rooms will once again be full of life and laughter

from the Lamon *comune* and a carpaccio of amberjack with caper sauce, anchovies and chives.

Each dish was full of flavour and beautifully presented but the pâté was truly exceptional. For our main courses we both chose risotto, one of our standard quality gauges – and were impressed. The black ink and baby cuttlefish *risotto al nero e seppioline* was of a perfect creamy consistency and tasted divine. For the pudding course Chef de Prà had prepared us some *golosessi* – Venetian goodies including caramelised fruit rum and coconut ice cream, organic fruit jelly and 'ancient style' tiramisù. This was certainly a meal to remember, and in an unforgettable setting too.

The next morning, after having enjoyed breakfast at a sunny table in the Yellow Dining Room, we continued to explore this amazing building. Taking lifts and following twisty corridors, we made our way up to the new roof terrace known as the Altana to take in the panoramic views of the city.

Reflecting on the transformation, we realised that turning an ancient palazzo into a 21st century hotel was bound to involve certain compromises. In general the more modern furnishings are neutral in form and tone and wisely make no attempt to compete with the splendour of the original elements. There are however a few things which jar – why for example, were such low tables chosen for the dining room? They oblige the waiters to bend almost double to take orders. Nor did we find sitting to eat on low, upholstered, armchair-like seats very satisfactory.

These, however, are but tiny quibbles, for this is probably the most thorough, meticulous and delicate restoration ever to have taken place in Venice and one which we felt privileged to see. As we watched the boats on the Grand Canal even the logistics which the Dottor Construction Group must have employed to take away the debris and bring in the materials, including a huge crane, seemed almost beyond our imaginings, to say nothing of the fact that it was completed within 18 months and on budget.

Just before we leave I climb the stairs again and look out of the window through which Andrea di Robilant's lovers waved to each other. Remembering the state of the palazzo on the day I so unceremoniously barged in, I reflect that although the lovely old building may at first have been surprised to find itself being reinvented as a grand hotel now, with the future secure not only for generations of the Arrivabene family but also for the enjoyment of Aman guests, it must be satisfied that its beautiful rooms will once again be full of life and laughter. If you listen carefully you can almost hear its old stones sighing with relief at the thought of once again having a large and competent household staff dedicated to its on-going care. ■

INFORMATION

➤ **Aman Canal Grande Venice**
www.amanresorts.com/amancanalgrandevenice/home.aspx

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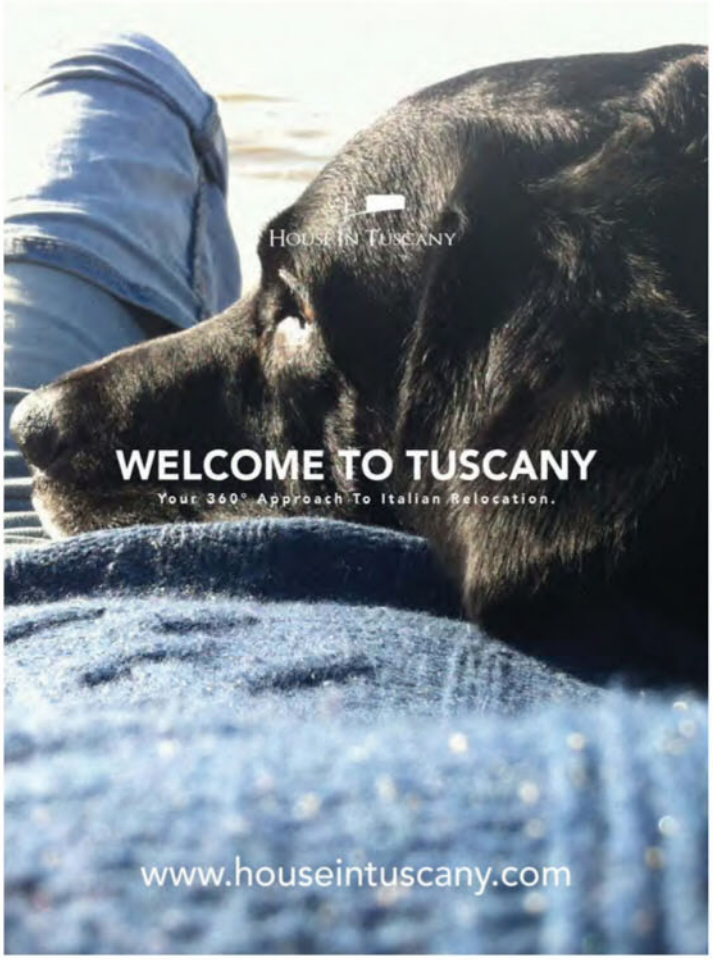
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THE TEMPLE OF ATHENA

The Temple of Athena stands at the highest point of the Ancient Greek town of Paestum, apart from the other temples in the complex...

The Temple of Athena at Paestum, in what is now the Province of Salerno, was built around 500BC by the Ancient Greeks. When the complex at Paestum was rediscovered by 18th century antiquarians, these, like the discoveries at Pompeii and Herculaneum – which occurred around the same time – caused the focus of classical studies to shift from Rome across the Ionian Sea to Greece. The Temple of Athena was first thought to have been a temple to Ceres, until a number of terracotta statuettes depicting Athena were discovered here. The temple faces east, so that the rising sun may awaken the statues within. There are three Christian tombs in the temple floor, indicating that the temple was at one time also used as a church.







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THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS



MARTINA TSCHIDERER Martina is one of House In Tuscany's advisors and partners. Her expertise now is in real estate, principally in Tuscany. Martina is a fully qualified estate agent and is collaborating with House in Tuscany as a real estate agent for them. www.houseintuscany.com



LAURA PROTTI is dual qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor. She has extensive experience in Italian property law, international private law, contract law, succession law, and taxation, and has assisted with the drafting and updating of books and articles on Italian Law. www.leplaw.co.uk



MAXIMILLIAN SMITH is Marketing Manager at De'Longhi UK and has a wealth of knowledge about coffee. De'Longhi make some of the best coffee machines on the market today – to see the full range of options for home coffee machines see their website at www.seriousaboutcoffee.com

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Our experts are here to help with all your questions about Italy. Email your questions to **italia@anthem-publishing.com**, or write to us at our usual address, as given on page 18.

HOUSE PRICES IN TUSCANY

***Q** Is it true that the cost of property in Tuscany has actually come down in recent years as I have read in the press? Are there particular 'hot spots' where property prices have continued to rise? My wife and I would like to retire there, though we'd be looking to borrow against our UK property to invest and wouldn't want to buy in an area where (ultimately) our children would be out of pocket.*

Jason Comber, *Birmingham*

A Prices have remained low in Italy since the global financial crisis which hit the country after the market peaked in 2007.

However, there were three times as many inquiries from potential buyers in January 2015 as there were in the previous January. We see optimism in general, but interest hasn't necessarily translated into increased prices. Those are still 30 per cent lower than they were at the market's peak, and a struggling euro means foreign buyers from Britain or the United States can get even more for their money. Somebody coming from the UK could be buying at a 40 per cent discount off peak because of the exchange rate being in their favour.

Tuscany, on the other hand, is a region with a reputation, a place whose name immediately brings clear images to mind. Tuscany's countryside is, to many, the quintessential Italian landscape – its cities are among the nation's most visited: Florence with its mighty duomo, Pisa with its wonky tower and Siena with its grand, sloping piazza. Tuscany is very firmly fixed in the popular imagination as a place of art, culture and sophisticated rural relaxation. And it's still, after more than forty years, the region most highly prized by foreign buyers of homes in Italy.

Certainly Tuscany's property prices have been altered beyond recognition over the past forty years as overseas buyers have vied for homes in the region and a huge number of ex-pats own homes here. Prices in Tuscany are more stable than in other regions of Italy, yet we still expect prices to lower further during this year (-4.2 per cent), but as from 2016 a slow price increase can be expected.

Tuscany famously has some of the highest-priced country property in the world. But Tuscany isn't expensive everywhere. The famous "Chiantishire", or cities like Florence, Siena, Lucca are rather stable and prices are slowly increasing. This is a large region with many parts to it, and there are still plenty of reasonably priced areas, plus some surprisingly inexpensive ones. In the lovely mountainous areas north of Lucca, for example, you could get a village house for well under €100,000, or a good-sized country home for as little as €250,000. Similar prices can be found in Tuscany's far south.

Tuscany remains an extremely good investment – wherever you choose to buy.

Martina Tschiderer, *Partner of House in Tuscany and Real Estate Advisor (Fully qualified real estate agent)*



Barga, north of Lucca – affordable Tuscany

ITALIA! legal expert

LAND BOUNDARY LAW

Q ***I have recently bought a property in Umbria, though have only just noticed, upon looking at the plans, that the neighbouring house has moved a fixed fence onto what should be my land. We're only talking about two metres or so, though I do feel aggrieved and would like to claim back my stretch of land. Am I legally entitled to remove the fence and have a new one constructed along the actual boundary of my property? I don't know how long the fence has been there, but judging by the dilapidated quality of the woodwork I would suggest at least fifteen to twenty years.***
Iain Holme, *via email*

A Real estate rights in Italy may be acquired when exercised for long periods of time in a continuous, non-violent or clandestine way. This way of acquiring real rights on immovable property is called *usucapione* (it usually lasts twenty years and this period can be reduced to ten years under specific circumstances). If the state of the fence appears to show that it has been there for over fifteen to twenty years, it would be initially advisable to establish the exact position of your boundaries with the assistance of a qualified surveyor. If the surveyor finds that the neighbour's fence is in fact located within your boundaries, you should make enquiries to establish when the fence was installed and whether it was put there with the consent of the previous owners of your property. If the findings establish that you are entitled to claim back the portion of the property, it is advisable to try to discuss this issue with your neighbour in order to fix a new bordering fence in the correct position in an amicable way. Should your neighbour oppose the removal of the fence, you will need to ask the relevant local Courts to consider your claim and establish where the bordering fence/wall should be positioned. A forced removal of the existing fence may entitle your neighbour to start legal proceedings against you to protect his long established right of possession of the portion of land in question.
Laura Protti, *LEP Law*



Wandering fence trouble in Umbria

Laura Protti is the founder of LEP Law. She is dual-qualified as an Italian *avvocato* and English solicitor, and specialises in assisting British and Italian clients with matters relating to Italian law. Visit her website at **www.leplaw.co.uk** for more.

Coffee Corner

OF PODS AND CAPSULES

Q ***I am replacing my ancient espresso machine and want to buy a pod-based machine, though I don't understand some of the terminology. Can you please explain the difference between a pod coffee machine and a capsule one?***
David Hunkins, *Cornwall*

A Pod machines generally use plastic containers (pods) for coffee or other drink mixes, whilst capsule machines use aluminium containers (capsules). This terminology is not really very helpful since most machines will serve a variety of coffee drinks whether in a plastic or aluminium pod and there are other characteristics of a product that will affect the final result.

The majority of coffee shop drinks have an espresso as the primary ingredient. To get the best espresso flavour and aroma will in part depend on the pressure of extraction. Look for a maximum extraction pressure of 15 bar or more for a better espresso and coffee.

Metal pods are also more readily recyclable and some capsule manufacturers offer a recycling service when you order more capsules.



The Stelia is pod-based

Whether you go for pod or capsule it's worth consider the following:

- Take a look at the cost of capsules/pods before you buy a machine. Some say you can't put a price on a good coffee, but some machines require you to use two capsules to make one drink, which tends to be more expensive.
- If you enjoy different origins and blends of coffee then choose a machine that offers a wide variety of coffee capsules.
- Some machines are multi-beverage, letting you to serve up teas, hot chocolate and other non-coffee-based drinks.
- If you like the taste of fresh milk, or simply prefer to have a say in the type of milk you use, then choose a machine with a fresh-milk frothing carafe, like the Nespresso Lattissima Touch.



The Nespresso Lattissima Touch is capsule-based

Maximillian Smith, *Trade Marketing Manager De'Longhi*
www.seriousaboutcoffee.com

DēLonghi





The boxer

To me, the man is not just a washed-up boxer. He's a brilliant metaphor for the wounds we all accumulate, body and soul

IN THE PALAZZO MASSIMO ALLE TERME IN ROME, there are two statues in a rather small, bare room. One is an heroic bronze of the Hellenistic Age, the last great era of Greek art. It shows a nude young man leaning nonchalantly on a lance. His head seems just a bit too small for the larger-than-life-size body. He was, they say, a Seleucid prince, and the image was perhaps made in around 100 BC. The body is perfect, a paragon of male beauty. The face is smooth, the expression bland and slightly smug. I didn't feel, while viewing this piece of ancient eye-candy, that if the statue began to speak, he would say anything interesting.

The other figure, in bronze, is a middle-aged man sitting on a large stone. He, too, is nude (or nearly so), wearing only leather wrappings around his hands and wrists. His body is muscular and athletic, though it sags with exhaustion. It might be a paragon of classical beauty, too, except that his shoulders are spattered with blood (represented by applied copper, red against dark bronze). His head is turned, as if looking at someone standing over his right shoulder. His hair and beard are thick and curly. His eyes are dark, because the sockets are empty, and show only the darkness within the hollow sculpture. Once, the sockets would have held eyes made of glass or stone, but they have been lost.

There are bleeding cuts, again represented by applied copper, on the bridge and end of his broken nose, on his forehead and eyebrows, and beneath his eyes, where the swollen flesh has split apart. His lips are swollen, too, and his ears. The sculptor has somehow managed to convey the impression of cumulative damage as well. The man slumped on the stone is old beyond his years, and immensely weary.

The figure was cast using the lost-wax process. It also is Hellenistic, and may date from between 330 BC and 50 BC. Some attribute it to Lysippos, Alexander's favourite sculptor, but most scholars disagree. Others say it is the work of Apollonius the Athenian, and that he signed it on a strap of the fighter's gloves. Or, of course, it could have been created by an ancient genius of whom we know nothing. It was found on the slopes of the Quirinal, in Rome, in 1885, during building excavations. Perhaps it came from the Baths of Constantine.

It may be that the battered face was designed to shock, or frighten, or simply demonstrate the sculptor's skill. I don't think so. I think the sculptor has attempted something profound, and achieved it. To me, the man is not just a washed-up boxer. He's a brilliant metaphor for the wounds we all accumulate, body and soul; when you go, look into his anguished face, swollen lips parted as if asking for mercy or rest. You may be tempted to whisper, "Rest, my friend. I understand." ■



The Boxer is athletic and beautiful, yet exhausted and aged beyond his years

Photography © Pat Gartman

ABOUT THE WRITER

JOE GARTMAN is a freelance writer based in Utah. A passionate amateur of art and history, and an avid traveller, he spends much time in Italy.

Through Puglia

Mark Nicholls travels through the historic landscape and towns of Italy's heel...

They call it La Città Bianca, the white city. From a distance, tightly-packed homes – most with a vivid, snow-white veneer – tumble down the escarpment the community of Ostuni sits upon. Buttressed at key points by medieval turrets, ancient homes cascade away like a multi-tiered wedding cake as the old city gives way to the modern town and the land drifts into the distance across the flat plain that stretches down to the Adriatic Sea.

For as far as the eye can see, neat rows of olive trees cover the terrain, some of the 60 million that make Puglia one of the world's most important olive oil producing regions and a product which underpins the economy of this part of southern Italy.

The custom of using white lime to cover the houses of Ostuni originated in the Middle Ages to reflect the light through the small alleys but later, in the 17th century, white lime was also regarded as a way to prevent the spread of plague and pestilence.

As you wind your way up from Piazza Sant'Oronzo, along a cobbled street lined with shops, cafés and boutiques, and into the heart of the historic citadel of Ostuni, take time and pause to peer into the quiet courtyards and maze of alleys around the cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. Within, the form is of a Latin cross, with a nave and two aisles separated by columns.

Ostuni is one of the larger towns in this part of Puglia and sits, like Locorotondo, Martina Franca, and Alberobello, along a spinal ridge that is the remnants of the southern Apennines, in a region where the economy is rooted in agriculture. It is a land of fishing harbours and a craggy shoreline, beautiful towns and villages, the unique *trulli* houses, and the strategic *masseria*, the grand, fortified residences where the powerful families lived.

The Mediterranean climate of Puglia ensures a mild winter and while in the summer months the temperature soars, spring is a beautiful time to visit, with flowers adding colour between the olive trees and a light freshness to the air.



The 'White City' of Ostuni, painted so to reflect light but not heat along its narrow streets

The clock tower at Cisternino

Trulli in Alberobello

The waterside at Monopoli

Photography © Mark Nicholls unless otherwise stated

TO THE TRULLI OF ALBEROBELLO

From Ostuni, a semi-circular drive takes you through this rolling landscape and the main towns of the area, each similarly based on an historic heart with winding alleys leading to a central square, such as in Cisternino, which is dominated by an impressive clock. Traditionally a town of butchers, in many of the cafés and restaurants you can pick out your cut of meat and then have it cooked to your requirements to eat on the premises.

From Cisternino the road progresses to Locorotondo, 25km inland, where again white-painted buildings – many in the exuberant baroque style – cascade down the hillside away from the church of St George the Martyr. Nearby is Martina Franca, the largest town in the area, famed for opera and as a centre for the wine that Puglia is quietly gathering greater recognition for producing. These are towns to pause in and explore on foot, poking around quiet corners and alleys to enjoy the ambience and architecture.

Puglia – or Apulia – the high heel on the boot of Italy, is also increasingly popular with A-list actors and musicians. Francis Ford Coppola, Meryl Streep and Helen Mirren have bought homes in the region, as has musician Mick Hucknall from Simply Red, and in October 2012 Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel exchanged wedding vows on the Apulian coastline.

Heading on through the Valle d'Itria, it is the small round houses that catch the eye. Known as *trulli*, these distinctive traditional homes are what give the valley its identity. Most are of only one room with a stone conical roof, features which maintain the room at a constant temperature – pleasantly warm in winter and refreshingly cool in the summer time. While you will see them along the road side as you drive – and even modern buildings have stylish conical domes that reflect the character of the landscape – it is in the town of Alberobello that you will see the greatest, and most picturesque, concentration of trulli. Here, street upon street of these fascinating limestone dwellings lead down to the main thoroughfare, and they are uniquely preserved. One story (actually not true) is that the roofs of the trulli were held in place by key stones. When the tax inspector was coming, these stones could be removed so the roof collapsed. Those who owned houses without a roof did not pay tax. Obviously, when the tax man left, the roofs were reassembled.

Though this is just local legend, the original trulli could be built and dismantled with relative ease and remain remarkable examples of drywall construction, which is actually a prehistoric building technique still in use in this region. Made of roughly worked limestone boulders collected from neighbouring fields, they can feature pyramidal, domed or conical roofs built up of corbelled limestone slabs and since 1996 the trulli of Alberobello have been designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

Another distinctive architectural feature of the Puglian landscape is the *masseria*. Neither castle nor fortress, historically they were fortified farm houses or homes on a country estate, imposing and strategically located to dominate the surrounding countryside. Many are found close to the coast between Bari and Brindisi with some now converted to holiday accommodation, ranging from the rustic to the luxurious.

Among the more famous is the Masseria San Domenico. Close to the village of Savelletri and dating from the 15th century, when it was used by the Knights of Malta (a chivalrous order founded in the Middle Ages) as a lookout over the Adriatic and to defend against Ottoman attacks, it is now a 5-star spa and residence with exclusive accommodation.

Inevitably surrounded by olive groves – which produce oil for the hotel kitchens – the grounds also host some intriguing, much older, specimens. Gnarled and ancient, some are more than 2,000 years old, pre-dating Christianity and having borne witness to the Romans as they passed through en route to Greece and Albania; Arab invaders ➤


Domenico Modugno


Entering Martina Franca


The main beach at Polignano a Mare


The old town in Ostuni

INFORMATION

➤ Mark stayed at Masseria San Domenico and flew from London Stansted to Bari. With luxurious rooms and renowned as a thalassotherapy spa and golf resort, Masseria San Domenico is part of San Domenico Hotels, which comprises of four properties in Italy and the UK: the 47-room Masseria San Domenico, the 15-room Masseria Cimino and the 4-room San Domenico a Mare, plus the resort Borgo Egnazia; along with the 18-suite San Domenico House in London. The group also owns and operates the 18-hole par 72 San Domenico Golf course in Puglia, home of the annual PGA European Challenge Tour Grand Final since 2005 and flanked by Masseria San Domenico and Masseria Cimino. With a spa and relaxation area, therapies include a Thalasso daily package of three treatments for €165.

too, and others who likewise left an indelible imprint on this fascinating part of Italy.

Today, the Masseria San Domenico is owned and run by the Melpignano family and for many years was a summer residence before conversion into a stylish hotel in the mid-1990s. With 46 suites and rooms and a shoreline annexe with four rooms and a fish restaurant, it offers a healthy, stylish and secluded lifestyle as the appeal blending 5-star boutique-style intimacy with elegance, Puglian cuisine and privacy.

Reached by a long driveway through the olive plantation and set 500m from the Adriatic coast, with Brindisi half an hour's drive to the south and Bari an hour away to the north, the restored Masseria San Domenico also incorporates a thalassotherapy spa, which harnesses the benefits of the mineral-rich seawater and seaweed found in the Adriatic Sea. The seawater used in the spa is drawn from a deep underground stratum, around 400m below sea level, before being filtered, purified and heated for use in a wide range of specialist treatments and high-tech therapies, from hydromassages and algotherapy to hypothermal marine treatment. While using a variety of products from international spa and beauty brands, Masseria San Domenico also has its own range of olive oil-based spa products, produced from olives grown in the Masseria's own groves. Signature treatments such as Olive Oil Envelopment in Aromatherapy for the skin are said to provide moisturising and anti-ageing benefits. The spa area also features a wonderful indoor pool and relaxation area and there is a stunning outdoor pool for the summer months.

Masseria San Domenico also owns and operates the 18-hole par 72 San Domenico Golf course, home of the annual PGA European Challenge Tour Grand Final since 2005.

APULIAN CUISINE

As a fundamental part of its well-being philosophy, Masseria San Domenico promotes the Mediterranean Diet and specialises in Apulian cuisine. Expect to see *medaglioni di melanzane con vellutata di pomodoro* (aubergine medallions with tomato velouté) as a speciality, along with shellfish, veal and rabbit (peasant style), as well as an increasingly impressive range of wine from the region.

The Masseria San Domenico



The San Domenico golf course

Photograph © Masseria San Domenico

Adding to the ambience, the main Ristorante San Domenico retains the classic architectural setting in the Apulian style of an arched and vaulted ceiling. Federico Versari, the hotel's general manager, underlined the importance of serving fresh produce grown on the estate and retaining the simple Apulian style of cooking and traditional recipes in its range of restaurants. "We produce our own olive oil, 80 per cent of our own vegetables and 60 per cent of our own fruit," he said. "Our food is based in simplistic luxury and follows the Mediterranean diet."

Fish and seafood features strongly, with the hotel set so closely to the Adriatic and along a coastline renowned for its fishing communities. "With the sea affected by the warm currents from Greece, it has the richest fish varieties in the whole region from lobster and tuna to red snapper. It is perfect for the fish lover, the varieties are amazing and an important part of the Mediterranean diet and the gastronomy of Puglia," Federico added.

Just along the coast, Polignano a Mare is an old fishing community and sits astride a stunning gorge with apartments reaching up above to the limestone cliffs. For a great view, cross the main bridge and enjoy the spectacle of the waves crashing ashore. Pause, also, for an ice cream. The town is famous for them. We found a favourite at the Mario Campanella Bar Gelateria. Polignano a Mare is also the birthplace of singer/songwriter Domenico Modugno, who had an international hit in 1958 with the song *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, aka *Volare*. There is a shoreline statue of the town's favourite son, arms outstretched and in full voice.

For those who may love to explore below ground too, Puglia has a number of attractive caves; the Castellana Grotte is spectacular with its glistening stalactites. Further along is the busier port of Monopoli and its fishing harbour and of course, with more time, there are the cities of Bari, Brindisi and Lecce to explore too.

However, while Puglia is growing in popularity with the celebrity set, it's not just the well-heeled who can enjoy this fabulous location. Think boot of Italy, think heel, think Puglia… and then acknowledge the Masseria San Domenico and the white-washed towns and villages just inland as its glittering spurs. !

INFORMATION

➤ **Classic Collection Holidays offers 1 free night in 7 and 2 free nights in 14 for selected stays at the Masseria San Domenico until 23 December 2015. For more information call 0800 294 9318 and visit www.classic-collection.co.uk and www.sandomenicohotels.com**



This page: luxury spa, accommodation and dining at the Masseria San Domenico

Photograph © Masseria San Domenico

Photograph © Masseria San Domenico

Photograph © Masseria San Domenico



Perugia is not only a great place to live, it also has a buoyant rental market. (See this month's Homes In... feature, starting on page 20)

Buying a Home in Italy

PART 1

Owning a property in Italy is a dream that many people have made into a reality. And so can you. In this first of a three-part series, **Fleur Kinson** guides you through the initial why, what and where...

Admit it. You love Italy. (Why else would you be reading this excellent magazine?) You've visited the country many times and been enchanted by its sensuous climate, its jaw-dropping landscapes, exquisite buildings, friendly people, spectacular food and... do I need to go on? The fact is, you're smitten, and you want more. You long to get closer to Italy and enjoy more of its lifestyle, and you realise that the best way to do this would be to secure your own bolthole here. Very sensible of you!

Staying in a home of your own when you're abroad is very different to staying in a hotel or self-catering property. There's greater freedom and privacy, of course, but there's also a sense of living like a local person and being much more in touch with the place you're in. You get to know your locality intimately, local people befriend you, and you become part of the community. There's a lot to be said for holidaying in a new and different place every time, but returning to the same place again and again? Well, that has its own very special charms. Ultimately, you end up with an Italian life as well as your life back at home.

There's another very sensible 'why' when it comes to buying a home in Italy, and that's financial investment. We all know that for quite some years now it has generally been wiser to put your money into bricks and mortar than to let it gather dust in a bank account. Property tends to give a better rate of appreciation than the interest offered by banks these days. And there's the added bonus that you can enjoy spending time at a property while it's appreciating in value.



THE MARKET

Italy is a particularly safe and stable country in which to buy a home. Regardless of what happens in the wider economy, the Italian property market is remarkably resistant to destructive booms and busts. Prices rise or sink modestly and slowly, without sudden steep climbs or plunges. Italians generally have a laudably healthy attitude to property – they build to last, and they don't over-build. They safeguard the attractiveness of popular areas by restricting building size and style, and they don't flood the market with a glut of properties that subsequently drive down prices. For a combination of enjoying your investment and feeling secure that your money has been safely spent, Italy makes a superlative choice.

And right now is a particularly wise time to buy in Italy. The international recession, which took so long to have an effect on Italian property prices, eventually did so – as a persistent dearth of foreign buyers finally prompted some vendors to inch down their asking prices and many others to be more receptive to offers. The end result is that you can now buy a home in Italy for a bit less than you would have paid for it in, say, 2007. Prices are not expected to go down any further and are instead anticipated to begin modestly rising again some time soon. Obviously nothing is guaranteed, but this is how things look to the many of us who make a close study of Italy's market.



Genoa is a bustling, forward-thinking city with very affordable property

BUDGETS AND WAYS OF BUYING

So much for the *why* you should buy, now what about the *what*? What sort of property do you want and what will your budget allow? These are big questions and anyone thinking of buying property in Italy needs to consider them very thoroughly before taking any further steps. It's crucial that you realistically identify your budget. And don't forget to include a margin for unforeseen expenses.

You should generally factor in an additional 10-20 per cent of any purchase price to cover the various fees that attend homebuying. (These can include a combination of registration fee, land registry fees or stamp duty, notary fees, legal fees if you want independent advice, the estate agent's fee, a mortgage fee if applicable, the IVA tax if you're buying from a company, and state tax if you're buying from a private individual.) Factor this extra 10-20 per cent expenditure into your budget right from the start and it won't come as an unpleasant surprise later on.

Now, what sort of purchase are you going to make? Are you going to buy a place outright and use it as a private holiday home (or even new full-time residence)? Are you going to offer holiday rentals on the property when you're not there, to help cover your costs? Or might you be interested in buying into a fractional ownership property? We've discussed FO schemes a few times in this magazine, and they remain for some buyers a very good alternative to buying an entire house.

If you've never heard of it, here in a nutshell is how fractional ownership works. Essentially, for a five-figure sum, you can buy a fraction of what is usually a seven-figure home. This entitles you to stay in the whole property for several weeks every year, but unlike with the ill-reputed 'timeshare' system, you actually own a share of the home, your name is on the title deeds with the other owners and you can sell your share or leave it in a will whenever you like. If this sounds interesting to you, do investigate the well-operated fractional ownership options that currently exist across central Italian regions such as Tuscany and Le Marche.

But now let's return our attention to conventional, outright buying. If it's full ownership that you want, all of Italy falls under your prospecting gaze. And *where* becomes the key question, especially as location will have such an intimate connection to budget…



Even the grander estates may be within reach if you consider fractional ownership





The area around Pescara, in Le Marche, exemplifies how a coastal region can rise to hills in a short distance

CONSIDERING YOUR LOCATION

As you'd expect, different parts of Italy are pricier than others. But it's not just as simple as Tuscany = expensive, Calabria = cheap, and so on. Every Italian region has its higher and lower priced parts, and you need to investigate where might suit you best. There are price differences between city, village and rural locations, and between coastal, inland and mountain locations. Choosing where to buy in Italy involves complex interconnected considerations of what sort of landscape you prefer, how close to other people you want to be, how much travelling time you're happy to undertake, whether or not you already have a decisive affection for a particular region, and of course what your budget will allow.

Italy is a remarkably heterogeneous country, with big regional variations in language, culture, food, traditions and even climate. So you can't just say "I'll choose the cheapest region" and hope to find exactly the kind of Italy you might be looking for. Some understanding of the nation's general variation is called for, so here's a stab at a synopsis.

Northern Italy is sophisticated, well-run and industrious. It offers superb cuisine and a sky-high quality of life. It's also painfully beautiful, with celestial high mountains and heart-meltingly romantic lakes. Small, gem-like cities are numerous. Central Italy is a little sleepier, and is famed for its astonishing glut of art treasures and its absolutely idyllic countryside. Southern Italy, meanwhile, is typically hot, colourful and exuberant. It's economically poorer than northern and central Italy. Landscapes down here can be very dramatic, especially coastal ones.

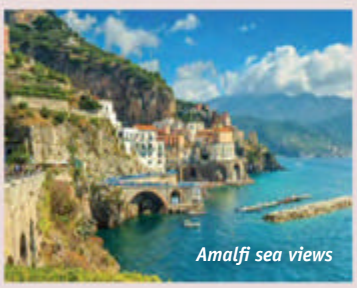
Generally, it can be said that northern and central Italy are pricier for property than the south, but there are many exceptions. For example, some of northern and central Italy's leafy highlands can present a real bargain, while gilded southern locales such as Capri or the Amalfi Coast can be eye-wateringly expensive. Obviously, you need to look around, do your research and get to know the options.



Tyrolean mountains



Tuscan countryside



Amalfi sea views

AS THE LAND GOES UP, THE PRICES GO DOWN…

Here are some other generalisations to apply irrespective of region or the north/south divide. Apart from ski resort areas, Italian property prices usually go down in inverse proportion to altitude. So the higher your elevation, the less you're likely to pay. This works out great for many foreign buyers, as they get wonderful panoramic views from on high, and because most of Italy tends to climb pretty quickly from the coast, chances are that beaches are never too far away. A good rule of thumb to maximize value-for-money is to seek a home about 20-40 minutes' drive from the sea.

What about the rural/urban divide? Most foreign buyers in Italy are seeking a country retreat rather than a city pad, and this means that rural property prices – while generally lower than urban ones – aren't always quite as low as you might expect. Especially for super-desirable old farmhouses. Here's a hot tip for you: consider buying in a village or a small town. Value-for-money is often greatest in these, and there's the huge added bonus of having some amenities on your doorstep and a ready pool of potential friends to embrace you into their community.

GETTING PROFESSIONAL HELP AND ADVICE

Hopefully, your appetite for searching has been whetted. There are lots of knowledgeable, helpful estate agents out there who specialize in helping foreign buyers like you find their dream home in Italy. Some advertise in this very magazine, others can be found through online searches. Investigate several agents, look through what's for sale, keep considering what exactly you want and where, and enjoy the start of your adventure! ■

INFORMATION

➤ **For more information on Italy's regions and their property markets, see *Italia!* magazine's website: www.italytravelandlife.com**

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4 takes on ASPARAGUS

It takes time and space to grow, and its season is short, yet there is nothing quite like the taste of fresh asparagus. Here are **four ways** the Italians use it to help herald the arrival of summer…









Photography, this image © iStock, over page © StockFood



Toasted ciabatta with pea and asparagus purée

Ciabatta con purè di piselli e asparagi

***SERVES** 2*
➤ ***Preparation***
15 minutes
➤ ***Cooking***
5 minutes

100g frozen peas, thawed
100g green asparagus, woody ends removed
salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tsp freshly chopped mint
6 slices of ciabatta
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp crème fraîche
1 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil, plus extra for frying
1 tbsp pecorino cheese, plus shavings to garnish

Cut the tips off the asparagus and reserve. Set aside 1 tbsp of peas. Put the peas and asparagus stalks, minus the tips, into a pan of boiling salted water and cook for a couple of minutes. Drain well and transfer to a food processor or blender. Blitz briefly until you have a rough purée, then drizzle in olive oil to loosen the mixture. Add the crème fraîche, pecorino and mint, then season to taste with salt, pepper and lemon juice. If the purée seems a little thick, add more olive oil and blitz again.

Place the ciabatta slices under a hot grill and toast until browned. Meanwhile quickly sauté the asparagus tips and reserved peas in a little olive oil, until tender.

Spread the toasted bread while still hot with the purée. Top with the fried asparagus tips and peas and scatter the crostini with pecorino shavings. Drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with pepper.



Pappardelle with spring vegetables

Pappardelle alle primizie d'orto

***SERVES** 2*
➤ ***Preparation***
10 minutes
➤ ***Cooking***
10 minutes

100g calabrese broccoli, divided into florets
50g mange tout
100g green asparagus, woody ends removed
30g unsalted butter
6 tbsp warm vegetable stock
salt and freshly ground black pepper
a small bunch chives
30g freshly grated Parmesan cheese
a pinch of saffron strands
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 garlic clove, peeled, finely chopped
180g pappardelle pasta

Set a large pan of salted water boiling on your hob and cook the pappardelle until al dente.

Stir the saffron into the vegetable stock and leave to infuse while you cook the vegetables. Bring some salted water to the boil and blanch the vegetables for 3-4 minutes. Drain the vegetables, refresh in iced water and drain thoroughly. Heat the butter in a wok or a deep frying pan until it foams, add the garlic and fry for 1 minute. Stir in the vegetables, then the stock. Season with salt and pepper. Cook for 2 minutes, until al dente.

Add the drained pasta and lemon juice and toss well. Snip the chives and sprinkle over the pasta and vegetables. Serve the Parmesan cheese separately.



Asparagus risotto

Risotto agli asparagi

SERVES *4*
➤ ***Preparation***
10 minutes
➤ ***Cooking***
35-40 minutes

250g asparagus, woody ends removed
1 shallot, peeled and finely diced
1 tbsp unsalted butter
200g carnaroli risotto rice
120ml dry white wine
250ml vegetable stock
30g freshly grated Parmesan cheese
salt and freshly ground black pepper
1 tbsp freshly chopped mint
1 tbsp Parmesan shavings for sprinkling

Cut the asparagus spears into 2cm lengths and simmer for 3-6 minutes in salted water. Drain, reserving the cooking liquid.

Heat the butter in a pan until it foams, then add the shallots and sweat until soft. Add the rice, stir well and toast briefly. Add the wine and stir until it has evaporated. Mix the asparagus cooking water and stock, then keep of warm in a saucepan over a low heat. Pour 2 ladlefuls of the stock onto the rice and cook over a medium heat, stirring, until it has been absorbed.

Continue to add the stock in this way, allowing the last ladleful to be absorbed before adding the next and stirring frequently. When the rice is al dente, stir in the asparagus tips, the remaining butter and the Parmesan. Stir in the mint and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve on warmed plates sprinkled with Parmesan shavings.



Asparagus wrapped in Parma ham

Asparagi al prosciutto di Parma

SERVES *2*
➤ ***Preparation***
10 minutes
➤ ***Cooking***
15 minutes

10 asparagus spears, woody ends removed
10 slices Parma ham
25g rocket
2 tbsp Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
5 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp white-wine vinegar
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. Simmer or steam the asparagus for about 5 minutes in salted water, then drain, refresh in cold water and drain thoroughly.

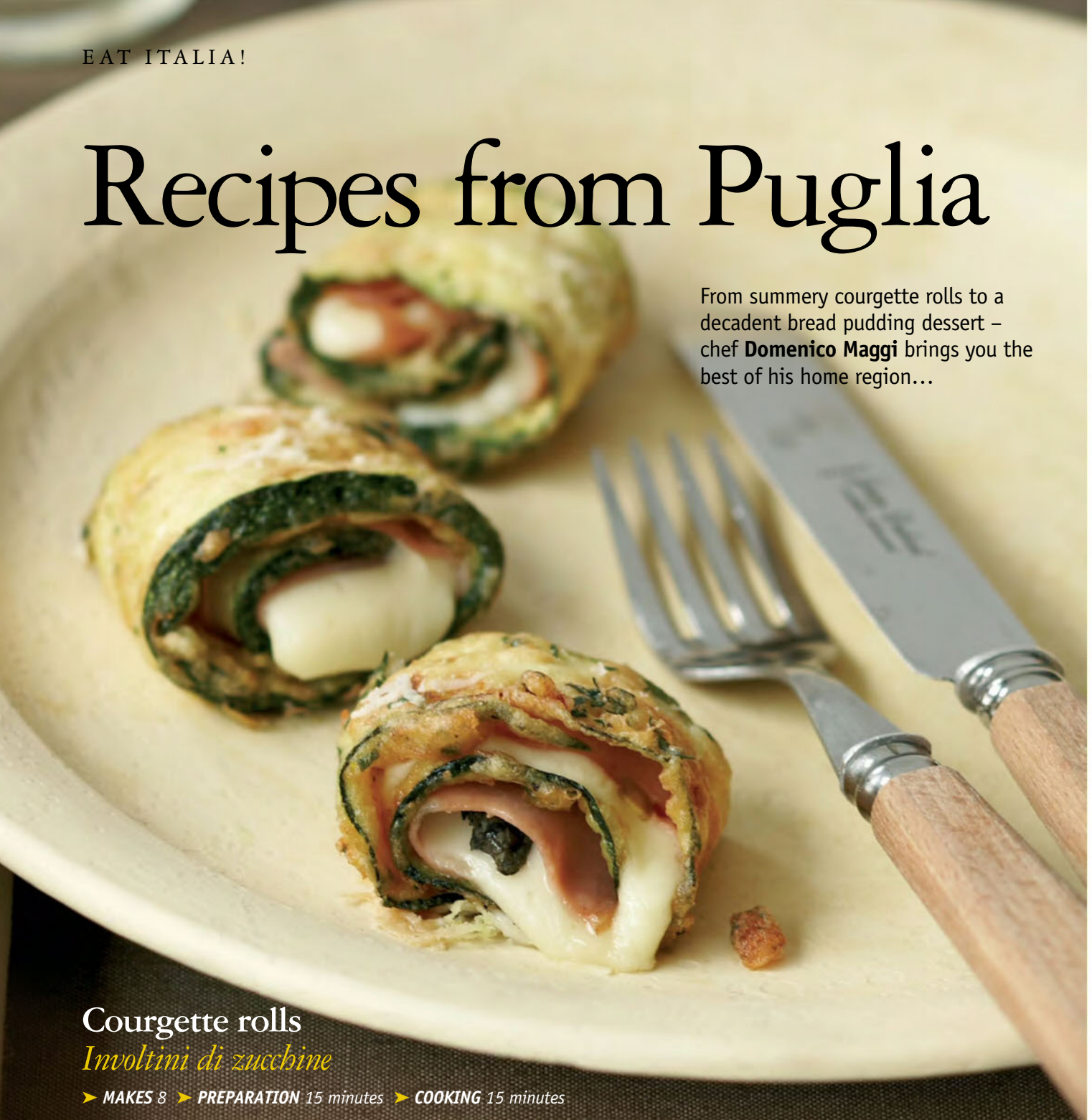
Wrap each asparagus spear in a slice of ham and lay side by side in an ovenproof baking dish. Sprinkle with a little freshly ground pepper. Mix the Parmesan with 3 tbsp olive oil and scatter over the asparagus. Bake in a preheated for about 6-8 minutes.

Arrange the rocket on the plates. Drizzle with 2 tbsp olive oil and vinegar. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and lay the asparagus on top. Serve immediately.

TIP: We love this dish on its own as an antipasto, but it also makes a wonderful accompaniment to panfried chicken breast and crushed new potatoes.

Recipes from Puglia

From summery courgette rolls to a decadent bread pudding dessert – chef **Domenico Maggi** brings you the best of his home region…



Courgette rolls
Involtini di zucchine

➤ ***MAKES*** *8* ➤ ***PREPARATION*** *15 minutes* ➤ ***COOKING*** *15 minutes*

Scamorza is smoked mozzarella cheese, which has a wonderful flavour. Don't worry if you cannot get hold of it, however, as this recipe is great with normal mozzarella.

1 large courgette (or 2 medium)
1 free-range egg
20g plain flour
40g grated Parmesan cheese
40g thinly sliced mortadella
1 tbsp fresh flat-leaf parsley, finely chopped
8 fresh mint leaves
100ml extra-virgin olive oil
80g sliced Scamorza or mozzarella cheese
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas Mark 4.

Wash and thinly slice the courgette lengthways, so that you have 8 long slices of courgette. Put the flour on a plate and turn the courgette in the flour, shaking off any excess. Beat the egg in a bowl with salt, pepper, a little of the grated Parmesan cheese and the chopped parsley.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan, until a breadcrumb sizzles when added to the pan. Dunk the floured slices of courgette into the beaten egg, then carefully add the courgette to the oil. Fry until just golden brown, then leave to drain on kitchen paper.

Place a slice of mortadella, the Scamorza or mozzarella cheese, and a leaf of mint on the courgette and gently roll it up. Place the rolls on a baking tray, sprinkle with cheese, drizzle with oil and bake in the oven for about 10 minutes.



Stuffed sardines

Sardine ripiene

➤ **SERVES** 4 ➤ **PREPARATION** 15 minutes ➤ **COOKING** 10 minutes

Sardines are plentiful in the Mediterranean Sea and an important part of the Sicilian diet. This recipe calls for them to be stuffed with cheese, coated with breadcrumbs and then fried.

12 medium fresh sardines, gutted, bones and head removed

FOR THE STUFFING

50g fresh breadcrumbs

50g ricotta and 50g pecorino cheese

1 free-range egg

grated rind of 1 lemon

2 tbsp chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

salt and freshly ground black pepper

FOR THE COATING (PANATURA)

1 free-range egg

50g plain flour

500g dry breadcrumbs

lemon wedges to serve

lots of olive oil for deep-frying

Heat plenty of olive oil in a large frying pan or wok. Mix all the stuffing ingredients together in a bowl and place a little inside each sardine and then close them up.

Beat the egg for the coating with a pinch of salt. Combine the ingredients for the coating in a large bowl then transfer to a wide dish with shallow sides. Turn the sardines in the panatura mixture, so that they are coated thoroughly, then lower gently into the hot oil. Once they are golden brown, drain on kitchen paper and serve with the lemon wedges.



Tiella of chicken
Tiella di pollo

➤ **SERVES** *4* ➤ **PREPARATION** *20 minutes, plus 1 hour soaking* ➤ **COOKING** *1 hour 10 minutes*

A 'tiella' is a round earthenware dish typical of Puglia, and anything that is cooked in that dish. Potatoes, rice, onion and mussels are the traditional ingredients, but chicken works very well.

1 whole free-range chicken, jointed, washed in water
150ml extra-virgin olive oil
100ml Locorotondo white wine, or other light, dry white wine
1 large onion, peeled, sliced
2 celery stalks, sliced
500g potatoes, peeled, cut into quarters
80g pecorino cheese, grated
150ml water
50g plain flour
6 tomatoes, cut into quarters
4 bay leaves
3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed
2 sprigs of rosemary
2 sprigs of thyme
1 tbsp flat-leaf parsley, roughly chopped
1 tbsp sage, chopped
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 170°C/Gas Mark 3. Put the flour into a wide, shallow dish and turn the chicken pieces in it. Heat the olive oil in a very large frying pan and fry the chicken pieces until sealed but not cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a large casserole or earthenware pot with a lid and add all the other ingredients. Toss together.

Pop in the oven and cook for about 1 hour, until all the vegetables are tender and nicely stewed together.



Altamura bread pudding

Torta di pane di Altamura

➤ **SERVES** *6* ➤ **PREPARATION** *20 minutes* ➤ **COOKING** *1 hour 10 minutes*

Altamura is renowned for the quality of its semolina bread, but it is obviously not widely available in Britain. You can substitute in any good-quality white bread.

125g two-day-old semolina bread, cut into small cubes
500ml single cream
3 free-range eggs
2 free-range egg yolks
100g icing sugar
50g grated white chocolate
25g unsalted butter
25g flaked almonds
50g sultanas
a pinch of cinnamon
zest of 1 lemon
1 vanilla pod, split open lengthways with a sharp knife
2 tbsp Moscato di Trani wine, or other good-quality white dessert wine

FOR THE MOSCATO SAUCE

330ml Moscato di Trani wine
3 free-range egg yolks
3 tbsp sugar
100ml single cream
2 vanilla pods, split open
1 tbsp cornflour

Preheat the oven to 110°C/Gas Mark ¼. Put the liqueur in a bowl and add the sultanas to soak. Grease 10 individual buttered cake moulds or ramekins.

Put the cream into a saucepan, add the vanilla pod and lemon zest and bring gently to a simmer. Beat the egg, egg yolks and sugar in a bowl, add the cream and strain into another bowl.

Mix the bread cubes with the chocolate, cinnamon and almond flakes. Drain the sultanas and mix these in too. Add some of the cream and egg mixture and let the bread absorb the liquid, then fill the greased moulds or ramekins with the bread.

Pour the rest of the cream and egg mixture over the bread.

Place the moulds into a roasting tin half filled with very hot water and bake in the oven for about 1 hour.

Make the sauce while the pudding cooks. Bring the Moscato and the vanilla pods to the boil in a saucepan. Meanwhile beat the egg yolks with the sugar and cornflour in a bowl.

Pour the Moscato onto this mixture and stir. Transfer back to the saucepan and, over a low flame, bring the temperature back up, but don't let it simmer. Remove from the heat and stir in the cream.

Remove the bread puddings from the oven and allow to cool slightly. Protecting your hands, remove the puddings from the moulds and serve with the Moscato sauce.

Pronto!

Some of the more complex Italian recipes will take hours to prepare (and just as long to enjoy!) But when you're in a hurry you're going to need quick-and-easy meals to prepare for your family. *Italia!* presents five of our favourites...



Gnocchi with spinach, Gorgonzola and pancetta

Gnocchi agli spinaci, Gorgonzola e pancetta

You can, if you have time and patience, make your own gnocchi, but it is an ingredient that does not suffer from being pre-prepared by a supermarket.

- ***SERVES*** *2*
- ***PREPARATION*** *5 minutes*
- ***COOKING*** *10 minutes*

250g good-quality ready-made potato gnocchi
80g cubetti di pancetta
100g mascarpone
70g Gorgonzola cheese, cut into cubes
150g baby-leaf spinach
salt and freshly ground pepper
a little grating of nutmeg
a dash of olive oil for frying

Put a drop of oil in a frying pan and place over a high heat. Once hot, add the pancetta and fry until crispy, stirring so it's cooked evenly, this should take about 5 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and set to drain on kitchen paper.

Put the mascarpone in a saucepan until it becomes fluid and is warmed through, then drop in the chopped Gorgonzola, stir frequently.

Meanwhile, get a pan of salted water boiling on the hob, then drop in the gnocchi. When they float to the top, they are ready to remove. Fish out with a perforated spoon.

Once the Gorgonzola has melted, add the spinach and stir until just wilted, which will take only a couple of minutes. Stir in the pancetta and season, then add the gnocchi and serve. Eat on its own or with a seasonal green salad.



Southern Italian layered potato pie

Patate al forno

New potatoes are abundant at this time of year and as well as being great boiled, they also bake very well.

- ***SERVES*** *2*
- ***PREPARATION*** *15 minutes*
- ***COOKING*** *35 minutes*

450g new potatoes, scrubbed
salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 onions, peeled, finely chopped
1 garlic clove, peeled, crushed
110g flat mushrooms, sliced
1 tbsp olive oil
110g mozzarella cheese, sliced
15g breadcrumbs
1 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley
handful of torn fresh basil leaves
50g freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Slice the potatoes into 5mm thick slices. Cook in a large pan of boiling salted water for 10-15 minutes until tender. Drain then push through a sieve.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6. While the potatoes cook, heat the oil in a frying pan, add the onions and fry for 5-10 minutes until golden. Add the garlic and cook for a further minute. Add the mushrooms and cook for another 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

Slice the mozzarella cheese. In a shallow ovenproof dish, sprinkle over half the breadcrumbs. Add a layer of mushrooms, sprinkle over half the parsley and basil and add a layer of mozzarella cheese, Parmesan cheese and potatoes. Repeat these layers, finishing with a layer of potatoes. Sprinkle over the remaining breadcrumbs.

Bake in the oven for 20 minutes until golden and bubbling. Serve straight from the oven.



Grandmother Furiani's radicchio lasagne

Lasagne al radicchio della nonna Furiani

Radicchio is a leaf chicory, sometimes known as Italian chicory, sometimes as red chicory, for its distinctive red and white leaves.

- ***SERVES*** *2*
- ***PREPARATION*** *15 minutes*
- ***COOKING*** *35 minutes*

olive oil

1 small onion, peeled and chopped

1 head radicchio, finely sliced

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

6 sheets fresh, dried or oven-ready lasagne

FOR THE WHITE SAUCE

25g butter

15g plain white flour

170ml milk

125g Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

½ tsp freshly grated nutmeg

Preheat the oven to 190°C/Gas Mark 5. Heat a little oil in a frying pan, add the onion and fry until golden. Add the radicchio and fry for 4-6 minutes, until the radicchio has wilted. Add some salt and pepper to taste.

Cook the lasagne as directed on the packet, if necessary, then drain well.

To make the white sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour and cook for 2-3 minutes, stirring. Remove the pan from the heat and gradually beat in the milk. Return to the heat and slowly bring to the boil, stirring all the time, until the sauce boils and thickens. Stir in three-quarters of the cheese, the radicchio mixture and the nutmeg.

Put a layer of sauce in the bottom of a square oven-proof dish. Place a layer of lasagne on top and then add another layer of sauce. Continue making layers, finishing it off with a layer of sauce. Cover the top with the remaining cheese. Bake for 25 minutes, until golden. Serve immediately.



Chicken Marsala

Pollo al Marsala

Chicken Marsala may have originated with British residents of Sicily in the 19th century. Certainly its popularity extends beyond Italian shores.

- ***SERVES*** *2*
- ***PREPARATION*** *10 minutes*
- ***COOKING*** *35 minutes*

2 medium organic free-range chicken breast fillets, pounded

seasoned Italian '00' flour

15g unsalted butter

1 tbsp olive oil

90ml dry Marsala

2 tbsp chicken stock

15g unsalted butter, softened

sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Coat the chicken in flour and shake off the excess. Heat the butter and oil together in a frying pan until the butter is foaming. Add the chicken and cook for 3 minutes on each side.

Stir in the Marsala and bring to the boil. Cover and simmer for 25-30 minutes, or until the chicken is cooked through, turning the meat occasionally.

Remove the chicken and set aside to keep warm. Add the stock to the Marsala and bring it to the boil. Boil for 2 minutes. Whisk in the softened butter and season to taste with black pepper. To serve, spoon the sauce over the chicken.



Rigatoni with chicken, broccoli and gremolata

Rigatoni al pollo, broccoli e gremolata

Some say you should never eat chicken with pasta. This is an exception to that rule.

- ***SERVES*** *2*
- ***PREPARATION*** *10 minutes*
- ***COOKING*** *15 minutes*

¼ a roast chicken, use Sunday's leftovers

250g rigatoni or tortiglioni

1 tbsp chopped black olives

½ a lemon

25g sun-dried tomatoes

2 tbsp chopped flat-leaf parsley

100g broccoli florets

1 clove garlic, peeled

2 tsp olive oil

salt and freshly ground black pepper

Cook the pasta in plenty of boiling, salted water until al dente.

Meanwhile, remove the chicken meat from the carcass and cut into pieces.

Blanch the broccoli in boiling, salted water for 3-4 minutes, then refresh in iced water and drain.

Chop the sun-dried tomatoes. Crush the garlic. Heat the oil in a frying pan and add the garlic, tomatoes and chicken. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Grate a little lemon rind into the pan, squeeze in the lemon juice and warm over a low heat for about 8-10 minutes.

Add the broccoli and heat very gently for a further 5 minutes or so. Mix in the chopped olives and parsley and reheat. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix with the cooked pasta and serve hot.

TINNED CHOPPED TOMATOES

The best Italian sauces are made with fresh tomatoes, but the tinned alternatives are often just as good, especially **when you need something quick** and easy, out of season. We taste a selection...

Not everyone has the space to grow their own tomatoes. It's true – fresh is best – but when you're making a basic ragu there's nothing wrong in using a tin of quality chopped tomatoes from the supermarket shelves. (Some cooks prefer whole plum tomatoes that will slowly break down as the sauce steeps, suggesting that a sauce can turn bitter if chopped tomatoes are used. But we disagree…) For this taste test we sampled the tomatoes both raw, fresh from the tin, and we also made seven identical beef-based pasta sauces to see how each tin performed when used as intended. The results were surprising – you'd expect tinned chopped tomatoes to be the same, but they are all very different.





CIRIO CHOPPED TOMATOES AUTENTICO ITALIANO
From **Various supermarkets**
Typical price **£1.00**
Whereas some tinned chopped tomatoes can be a tad 'mushy', these tomatoes from Cirio have a great definition and provide an initial firm bite. They're sweet, though not overly so, and make a really smooth beef sauce. There's certainly no need to add extra sugar here. We'd suggest that these tomatoes be cooked over a low heat for a prolonged period, which will help to meld a smoother ragu.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Defined chunks of quality tomato taste great fresh from the tin, and also make an exceptional base for a fine pasta sauce.

1 THE CO-OPERATIVE 'LOVED BY US' ITALIAN CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **The Co-operative**
www.co-operative.coop
Price **£0.55**
These tomatoes are cheap at just 55p per can, but they're surprisingly good. Fresh-tasting and quite 'solid', they also make for the basis of a great beef pasta sauce.

VERDICT ★★★★

Yes, they're cheap, but don't let that put you off. These tomatoes from the Co-op are a quality choice and help to create a lovely meat sauce.

2 SAINSBURY'S SO ORGANIC CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **Sainsbury's**
www.sainburys.co.uk
Price **£0.80**
Genuine Italian tomatoes are used within these top-quality organic offerings. They're really tasty, and the sauce we made with them had a real depth of flavour. A pinch of sugar wouldn't go amiss, mind.

VERDICT ★★★★

They're organic, and they taste great, if a tiny bit acidic. Best used in a meat or veggie sauce with a small helping of sugar.



3 NAPOLINA CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **Various supermarkets**
Typical price **£1.05**

The well-known Napolina brand of tomatoes doesn't disappoint. These are firm to bite and unusually sweet. These tomatoes break down nicely when cooked in a sauce, adding a smooth, even consistency to your ragu. Okay, so they're not cheap, but they're worth it.

VERDICT ★★★★★

Definitely one of the better tins of chopped tomatoes available, these are full of flavour and work really well in a beef sauce.

4 ESSENTIAL WAITROSE CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **Waitrose**
www.waitrose.com
Price **£0.50**

These tomatoes are relatively cheap, though – as we've come to appreciate from Waitrose – the quality is high. Although slightly tart to taste raw, they make for a stunning sauce when combined with onions and quality beef.

VERDICT ★★★

These are really good value for money, and are great when combined with high-quality beef mince for the perfect spag' bol'.

5 TARENTELLA ORGANIC CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **The Co-Operative**
www.co-operative.com
Price **£1.09**

Another organic variety of tomatoes, these ones from Italian company Tarantella taste smooth and neutral, without too much in the way of acidity or sweetness. Cooked into a sauce they break down nicely.

VERDICT ★★★★

A really well-balanced flavour combines with a natural breakdown of texture when cooked into a sauce. And they're organic, too!

6 MORRISONS ITALIAN CHOPPED TOMATOES

From **Morrisons**
www.morrisons.com
Price **£0.35**

These are the cheapest of the tomatoes we've tasted this month, but they're all Italian and taste like the real deal. Yes, they have a slightly acidic punch, but that dissipates when cooked into a sauce. Great value!

VERDICT ★★★

Very cheap, but good nonetheless, these tomatoes represent great value for money and work well within a meat-based sauce.

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CHIANTI

The most famous of these **Tuscan wines** can cost a small fortune, but what of the cheaper, supermarket alternatives? **Paul Pettengale** samples some readily-available Chiantis...

The wines from the Chianti zone of Tuscany featured in the very first issue of *Italia!* over ten years ago. During that passing decade the price of the very best of Chianti has rocketed. Indeed, for some of the better known, and appreciated, examples the cost has more than doubled. Italian wine, never out of favour, but never fully acknowledged until recently, is on the rise. And the asking prices have gone but one way. But you can still drink well without spending huge amounts of money. The vast purchasing power of

We mixed it up completely, choosing wines that spanned the Chianti zone

the larger supermarkets means there are value wines on the shelves that will raise a smile every time you raise a glass.

In this issue of *Italia!* we taste six wines from the high street and compare them to our benchmark, a prestigious (and yet still – relatively – moderately priced) wine from one of our favourite importers, Great Western Wines of the magazine's home town of Bath, UK. This made for a very interesting tasting session. We mixed it up completely, choosing wines that spanned the Chianti zone (we weren't so choosey as to only select wines from the DOCG-defined Classico region), and blind tasted, so no one knew which was which. Read on for the results!





TESCO FINEST CHIANTI RISERVA 2011, ANTONELLA CONTI

From **Tesco**
www.tesco.com
Price **£7.00**

Don't be fooled by the use of the word Riserva on the label. It simply means that a Chianti wine has achieved a given level of alcohol, in this case 13 per cent (which actually isn't that high for a red). It has broad aromas that include the typical cherries and raspberries but also tobacco and tar. Rich and powerful, it doesn't have the finesse of the Chiantis from the Classico or Rufina zones, (see boxout, right), but is nonetheless delightful.



GREAT WITH...

This is a great cheese wine – try it with a mature pecorino from Tuscany.

WINEMAKERS' SELECTION CHIANTI 2013 DOCG

From **Sainsbury's**
www.sainsburys.com
Price **£6.00**

This is bargain basement Chianti, but it goes to show just how much the wines of the region have improved over the past decade. Once upon a time we'd be drinking inferior wines housed in a *fiasco* (straw-bound bottle), but for a mere six quid this wine is supple and expressive. It has all the character of a far more expensive Chianti, and yes, it's a little thin on the ground, but is both full on the nose and in the mouth. A great wine to enjoy with a slice of pizza.



GREAT WITH...

Pizza of your choice or a simple bowl of pasta with a meat ragu.

CHIANTI 2014, PICCINI

From **Sainsbury's**
www.sainsburys.com
Price **£6.50**

This is a young, fresh and vibrant Chianti that, at £6.50, is really good value for money as long as you don't expect too much from it. An easy-drinking wine, it will be perfect for a summer dinner party, especially if you're sat outside in the sun. Light and refreshing, this is a Tuscan wine as the Italians would enjoy it. Cherry aromas abound. We enjoyed it with grilled chicken, though it will certainly be light enough to be drunk alongside a plate of buttered, pan-fried whole fish too.



GREAT WITH...

Grilled chicken, or even seafood as long as it's cooked with robust herbs.

CHIANTI RISERVA 2011, MONDELLI

From **Sainsbury's**
www.sainsburys.com
Price **£8.00**

The first thing that hits you when you breathe in the aroma of this wine is the black cherry and spice. It's quite unlike most Chianti wines, suggesting a refined power and structure. However, once sipped, it's delicate and easy on the palate. There are forest fruits and a cigar-box smokiness, but it retains a freshness despite being bottled back in 2011. This is a very fine Chianti for the money, one of our favourites in fact, and very good value for money. Drink it with red meats.



GREAT WITH...

Grilled steak – goes well with rump – or lamb chops served nice and pink.

FONTERUTOLI CHIANTI CLASSICO 2013, MAZZEI

From **Great Western Wine**
www.greatwesternwine.com
Price **£17.95**

So, just what can you expect from a wine from a specialist importer that costs considerably more than the supermarket wines we selected for this issue's *Drink Italia!*? This example demonstrates a heady mix of ripe cherry and bramble on the nose, yet is soft and controlled in the mouth. Savoury with a hint of summer fruit sweetness, it has enough tannic character for it to stand up to the rich dishes from the Tuscan zone. A real winner of a wine.



GREAT WITH...

Get out the rifle and go shoot yourself a Tuscan wild boar! (Or sausages.)

CHIANTI CLASSICO 2012, RICASOLI

From **Waitrose**
www.waitrose.com
Price **£12.49**

We've said it many times before, but the wine buyers at Waitrose really do know what they're doing. This Waitrose-branded Chianti Classico is made by the renowned Ricasoli winery and is an absolute gem. It has aromas of freshly-picked red cherries with a touch of mint. In the mouth it's warm and satisfying though medium (rather than full) bodied, with a long, satisfying finish. It would work well with most meats (red or white), though we enjoyed it in the sun with barbecued chicken.



GREAT WITH...

Light up the BBQ and chuck on the chicken, or pork chops if you'd prefer.

CHIANTI RISERVA 2011, MELINI

From **Waitrose**
www.waitrose.com
Price **£9.99**

This is a pretty powerful wine, kicking in at 13.5 per cent ABV, though to drink it you'd never know it. Medium bodied, it has a very definite raspberry aroma (rather than the more typical cherry you'd expect from a Chianti), though is robust enough to stand up to the strongest of Tuscan dishes. It's a wine that will age well, so don't fear laying it down for several years, though it's drinking perfectly well now. In terms of food, venison and beef would suit it perfectly, as would roasted leg of lamb.



GREAT WITH...

Roasted red meats. Lamb – leg or shoulder – or perhaps rib of beef.

TAKE THE RUFINA WITH THE SMOOTH

Admittedly it's rare these days to come across a supermarket Chianti from the lesser-known Rufina zone. Higher up that the Classico designated area, the grapes are typically harvested later in the year and the wines take longer to mellow. Tannic at first, they will slowly develop to create wines of great character and complexity. Unfortunately, because of the time Chianti Rufina wines take to mature, they can achieve higher price tags, and because they're not particularly well known – especially in the UK and the US – they're not in as much demand overseas. But try one... You'll not be disappointed. An *Italia!* favourite? Chianti Rufina by Selvapiana.

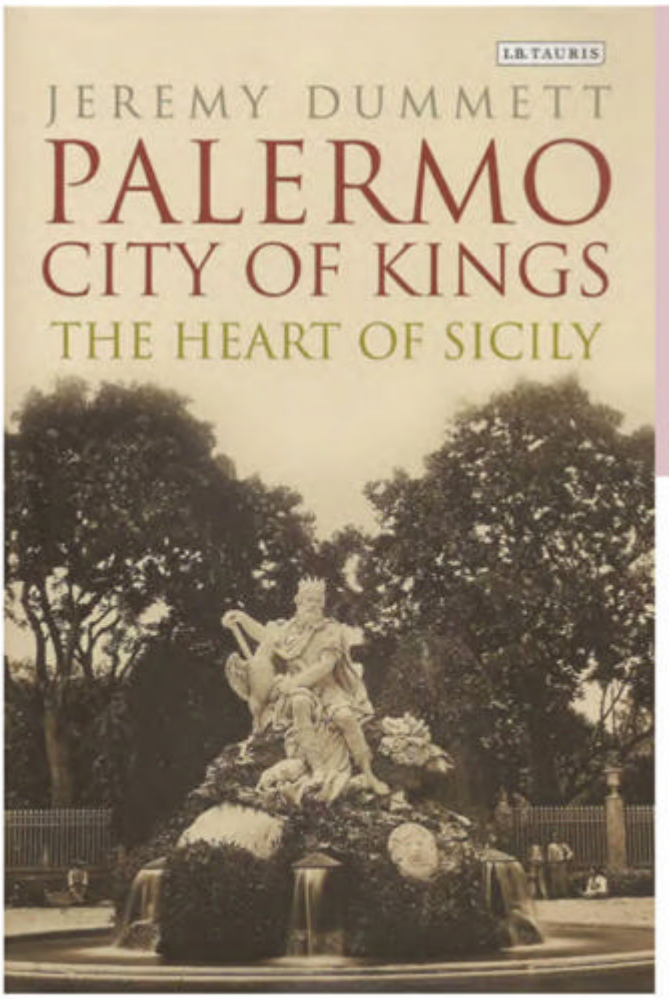
Because of the time Chianti Rufina wines take to mature, they can achieve higher price tags



Photograph © iStock

IN PRINT

A guide to Palermo **bold enough to deal** with the city's mafia connections, a guide to Siena that explains that city's internal rivalries, and a cookbook that will enable you to emulate the cuisine of Puglia...



PALERMO, CITY OF KINGS

Jeremy Dummett, IB Taurus, £18.99 (hardback)

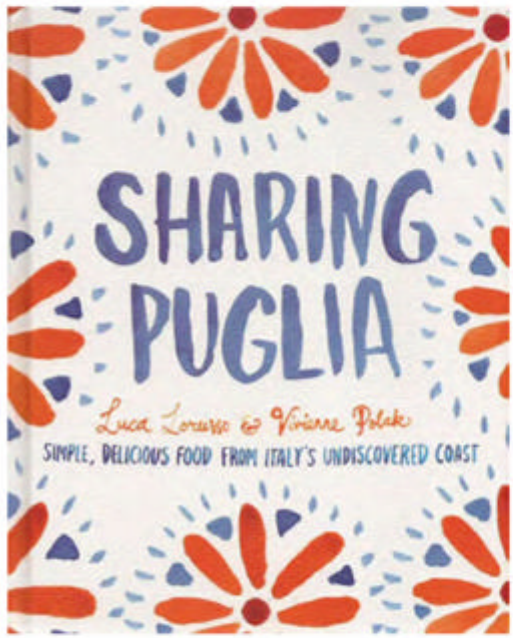
Described as "the essential guide to Palermo's history, monuments and architecture", this new release from the author of *Syracuse, City of Legends* is a remarkably detailed undertaking. It not only explores the art and artistic history of the capital of Sicily, it also examines the grittier side of this metropolis, daring to venture into its mafia underworld and the effect that that has had on Palermo. At its heart, though, this is a book about art and architecture, casting its eye back throughout the city's rich and ancient history, tracing back through its various rulers, including the Phoenicians, Romans, Arabs and Normans. If you intend to visit the city then many an insight can be found, and it could be used as a travel guide. And even if you're not going to Palermo any time soon, you could consider this a worthy read. Well written and entertaining – as well as illuminating – it should find its way onto the shelves of anyone with in an interest in the history of art, Sicily and – of course – Palermo itself.

SIENA, CITY OF SECRETS

Jane Tylus, The University of Chicago Press, £18.00 (hardback)

We have a guide to Palermo and now we've a guide to Siena, described by the publishers as a guidebook that "engages with the culture and the experience of this most secretive of cities". It certainly does well to delve beyond the usual tourist traps and explores and explains the historical rivalry between the city's various neighbourhoods. Buy a copy if you're going!





SHARING PUGLIA

Luca Lorusso and Vivienne Polak, Hardie Grant, £25.00 (hardback)

There have been a number of recipe books of late that explore the culinary offerings of the south of Italy, and of Puglia especially. This new offering, which spans almost 250 pages, is beautifully illustrated and presents a series of recipes from chef Luca Lorusso that are easy to follow and tempting from the outset. The region is famed for its simple, hearty fare and this new book brings that to the fore. Broken down into ten chapters ranging from 'sharing menus', through antipasti, soups, pasta, fish, meat and more, it's both inspiring and confidence building. There's even a great little section featuring kitchen essentials – the basics that every cook should have to emulate the best of Puglian cuisine.

NEXT MONTH IN

ITALIA!



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3 **Bari**	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
4 **Bergamo**	Bristol	Ryanair
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Knock Ireland West	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Ryanair
5 **Bologna**	Bristol	Ryanair
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Ryanair
6 **Brindisi**	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
7 **Cagliari**	LDN Gatwick	Meridiana, BA
	LDN Stansted	easyJet
8 **Catania**	Bristol	easyJet
	Birmingham	Thomson
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Norwegian, Thomson
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	Manchester	easyJet, Thomson
9 **Comiso**	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
10 **Florence**	Dublin	CityJet
	LDN Gatwick	Vueling
	LDN City	BA, CityJet
11 **Genoa**	LDN Gatwick	BA
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
12 **Lamezia**	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
13 **Milan Linate**	LDN City	Air France, Alitalia
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Heathrow	Alitalia, BA

DESTINATION	ORIGIN	OPERATOR
14 **Milan Malpensa**	Birmingham	BA, Flybe
	Bristol	BMI Regional
	Cardiff	Flybe
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	Edinburgh	easyJet
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	Manchester	BA, Flybe
	Southampton	Flybe
15 **Naples**	Birmingham	Thomson
	Bristol	easyJet, Thomson
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	East Midlands	Thomson
	Edinburgh	easyJet
	Glasgow	Thomson
	Leeds Bradford	Monarch
	Liverpool	easyJet
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Meridiana, Thomson
	LDN Luton	easyJet, Monarch, Thomson
	LDN Stansted	easyJet
	Manchester	Monarch, Thomson
	Newcastle	Thomson
16 **Olbia**	Bristol	easyJet
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet, Meridiana
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
17 **Palermo**	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
18 **Parma**	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
19 **Perugia**	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
20 **Pescara**	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
21 **Pisa**	Belfast	Jet2
	Bristol	easyJet
	Cork	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	East Midlands	Jet2, Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	Glasgow Prestwick	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2, Ryanair
	Liverpool	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2, easyJet
	Newcastle	Jet2

Every effort is made to ensure that the above **flight information** is correct, but do check specific flights before you plan your trip. Some routes may be seasonal.

DESTINATION	ORIGIN	OPERATOR
22 **Rome**	Belfast	Jet2
	Birmingham	Monarch
	Bristol	easyJet
	Dublin	Aer Lingus, Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Edinburgh	Ryanair
	Glasgow	Jet2
	Glasgow Prestwick	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2
	LDN City	Alitalia
	LDN Gatwick	BA,easyJet,Norwegian,Vueling
	LDN Heathrow	Alitalia, BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet, Monarch
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2, Ryanair
	Newcastle	Jet2
	Shannon	British Airways
23 **Trieste**	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
24 **Turin**	Birmingham	Monarch
	Dublin	Ryanair
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
	Manchester	Jet2
25 **Treviso**	Bristol	Ryanair
	Dublin	Ryanair
	East Midlands	Ryanair
	Leeds Bradford	Ryanair
	LDN Stansted	Ryanair
26 **Venice**	Birmingham	Monarch
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	Edinburgh	Jet2
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2,
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Monarch, Thomson
	LDN Heathrow	BA
	LDN Luton	easyJet
	Manchester	easyJet, Jet2, Monarch, Thomson
	LDN Southend	easyJet
27 **Verona**	Belfast	Jet2
	Cambridge	Eastern Airways
	Dublin	Aer Lingus
	Edinburgh	Jet2
	Leeds Bradford	Jet2
	LDN Gatwick	BA, easyJet, Monarch
	Manchester	Monarch
	Southampton	Flybe

From the **United States** there are direct flights to Italy from New York and Miami.



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- Alitalia www.alitalia.com ☎ 0870 225 5000
- BMI Regional www.bmiregional.com ☎ 0330 333 7998
- British Airways www.ba.com ☎ 0844 493 0787
- CityJet www.cityjet.com ☎ 0871 666 5050
- Eastern Airways www.easternairways.com ☎ 01652 680600
- easyJet www.easyjet.co.uk ☎ 0905 821 0905
- Flybe www.flybe.com ☎ 0871 700 2000
- Jet2 www.jet2.com ☎ 0871 226 1737
- Monarch Airlines www.monarch.co.uk ☎ 0871 940 5040
- Meridiana Airlines www.meridiana.it ☎ 0871 222 9319
- Norwegian Airlines www.norwegian.com ☎ 0843 378 0888
- Ryanair www.ryanair.com ☎ 0871 246 0000
- Thomson Airlines www.thomsonfly.com ☎ 0871 231 4787
- Vueling www.vueling.com ☎ 0906 754 7541

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- Dublin ☎ +353 1 814 1111
- East Midlands ☎ 0871 919 9000
- Edinburgh ☎ 0844 481 8989
- Glasgow ☎ 0844 481 5555
- Glasgow Prestwick ☎ 0871 223 0700
- Knock ☎ +353 94 936 8100
- Leeds Bradford ☎ 0871 288 2288
- Liverpool ☎ 0871 521 8484
- LDN City ☎ 020 7646 0088
- LDN Gatwick ☎ 0844 335 1802
- LDN Heathrow ☎ 0844 335 1801
- LDN Luton ☎ 01582 405100
- LDN Southend ☎ 01702 538500
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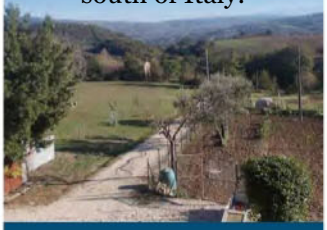


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My Italia!

This month *Italia!* editor **Paul Pettengale** describes his connection with Italy and how the magazine came to be…









Images courtesy of Paul Pettengale

SO, YOU'LL NO DOUBT WANT TO KNOW MY LINK TO ITALY?

As is so often the case, it's friends and family, though on my wife's side. Fiona has Italian aspects to her family and would holiday a lot in the country when she was young, mainly at a magnificent estate that has now – sadly – fallen into disrepair. She also had friends she made when they came to stay in the village she grew up in and in the year we met (1990) we decided to hitchhike to Rome to meet up with them there. We arrived via Paris, Lyon and Milan and, after spending a wonderful week seeing the sights as only a local can show you, her friends recommended we catch the night ferry (just £6 each!) to Sardinia. Back then the Costa Smeralda was completely undeveloped. We literally just pitched our tent next to the sea, yards from the beach. After a week there we had to hitch back to the UK (university was resuming), but we knew back then that we'd be back.

AND WHY *ITALIA!*? WHAT PROMPTED ITS LAUNCH?

Anthem Publishing was still young, less than a couple of years old, and I was on holiday at a house in France when my phone rang. A good friend of mine in the magazine business made a pitch… He had loads of experience in the travel magazine market, which was going through a growth spurt at the time. But, he insisted, the Italian market was lacking, with just one title on the newsstands, so why not launch a rival? But make it better? When I got back to the UK we met with my co-directors, Jon and Simon, and we decided to go for it. Some months later, in November 2004 the first issue of *Italia!* hit the shelves, though another magazine about Italy launched in the same month. But times have changed and today, of the three, *Italia!* is the only one still being published.

AS FOR STANDOUT MOMENTS ALONG THE WAY…

There are many. Far too many, in fact, to list here. Though if I had to narrow it down to a few I'd first go for my trip to the Montelucci estate in Tuscany where I spent a week learning how to cook Tuscan food under the tutelage of chef Carla Tomasi. It was as fascinating as it was educational, being surrounded by other cookery novices (in the recipes of that region, at least), all eager to learn and even more eager to eat the plates that we'd cooked ourselves for lunch and dinner. Another? I was privileged to be invited by Ferrari to spend a day at the world-famous Monza race track racing F430 and F360 car models. As a life-ling car nut and fan of Formula One, it was a dream come true. But the memory of Italy I shall take to my grave is that of running through the streets of Venice very late at night in the cold, pouring rain with my wife as we struggled to relocate our hotel after a wonderful evening meal.

SO, WHAT'S NEXT FOR *ITALIA!*?

Having launched the magazine just over ten years ago, and having been back editing it for the last year or so, I'm pleased to see that not a great deal has changed with the title. Like Italy itself, *Italia!* is something of a constant. That said all things have to change to survive, and I've got several plans for the magazine. We have new features, for example (see Fleur Kinson's first part of a series on buying a home in Italy, starting on page 72 of this issue), and we're in the process of gearing up our digital offerings, especially **www.italytravelandlife.com** and on Facebook – search *Italia!* magazine.

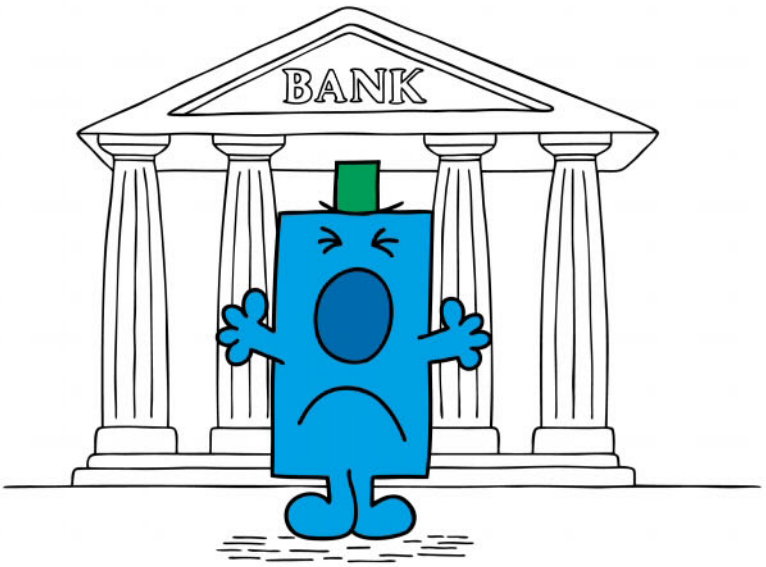
WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

If you want to tell the story of your relationship with Italy – whatever it is – get in touch with us! Send emails to italia@anthem-publishing.com with the subject line 'My Italia' and a brief description of your story.

From above: Your editor in his student days; racing Ferraris at Monza; learning about Italian cuisine has been of great benefit; Fiona and kids on a return to Sardinia

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